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SHORT, PRACTICAL SERMONS

FOR

EARLY MASSES.

CONTAINING ONE SERMON FOR EVERY SUNDAY IN THE YEAR.

FROM THE GERMAN

OF

REV. G. WOLFGARTEN,

BY A

PRIEST OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS, MO.

VOL. II.

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PREFACE.

Although the homiletical literature of the present day is very extensive, the number of short and practical sermons is small. Short, instructive sermons are a great necessity as well for the priest, who is usually obliged to say two Masses on Sundays, as for the people, many of whom are so circumstanced that they can spend but a limited time in listening to the word of God.

Hence the author of the following sermons has deemed it a service to the cause of our holy religion to publish a series of short Sunday sermons. These sermons were not merely written and revised in the studio, but, have been preached to the people, and, apparently, at least, with beneficial results.

It is the earnest prayer of the author that these sermons may serve to promote the greater honor and glory of God, to advance the salvation of the faithful, and to give a helping hand to his many confreres who are overburdened with manifold duties.

G. Wolfgarten,
Pastor of Elsdorf.

SHORT PRACTICAL SERMONS FOR EARLY MASSES.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

GOD'S JUSTIFICATION ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

"And they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty."
Luke 21, 27.

IT would seem that the last day, the day of judgment, should be called the day of man, because on that day all mankind must render an account to God. Each individual must give an account of all his thoughts, desires, works and omissions. The prophet Isaias (2, 12), however, calls this day, "the day of the Lord" and justly so. For, on this day the Creator will deign to recount His relation to the creature; on this day the Creator will manifest what He has done for His creatures, but He will also show what the creature has done for his Creator. God will manifest what He has

done for the sinner, the innumerable graces which, in His infinite mercy, He has bestowed upon him, but which the sinner insolently scorned and rejected. God will reveal to the whole world how often, through the voice of his conscience, He called the sinner to repentance; how often He warned him by inspirations of grace; how often He admonished him through the voice of His Church by the minister, the priest, through the entreaties of parents, husband or wife, children or friends, by instructions of good books; how often even through misfortunes, calamities or sickness, in order to make him return to God, but alas, all in vain. The infinite mercy will manifest how, on the sinner's death-bead, He offered His guilty creature reconciliation through the sacraments of the Church, or if this was impossible, by means of perfect contrition. Reconciliation with God, salvation of his soul by one act of the sinner's will, but all to no avail! Then justly the Supreme Judge will say: "What more could I have done for you than what I did? The heavens and the earth are witness that I have no part in

your damnation. I have given you the choice of everlasting life or death, of My blessing or curse, of Heaven or hell, and you, unhappy sinner, you, in sheer insanity, have chosen eternal death, eternal damnation.

The dreadful day of judgment, however, will manifest not only what the Creator has done for the creature, but also what the sinner has done against God. "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books according to their works." Apoc. 20, 12.

What is meant by those books which shall be opened? They are the consciences, the hearts of men; and what is that book in which they will be judged according to their works? It is the gospel. Yes, in the day of judgment, God will deign to lay open the consciences, the hearts of each individual, to reveal His justice and to confound the sinner. The Omnipotent will expose to view the life of each person in all its details;

it will be seen clearly and distinctly, — depicted, as it were, in a mirror, — in order that the malice of the sinner will become apparent to the whole world. Then will be shown the hidden sins of his childhood, the crimes of his youth, the negligence of his duties in his manhood and the perversity. and, perhaps, even lasciviousness of old age. All will be clearly shown to the whole world, though the darkness of night had concealed it, all, even the idle word, the secret evil thought will not be forgotten, for "the Lord . . . will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the councils of the heart." I Cor. 4, 5, says the Apostle St. Paul. And the Lord will say to the good, His saints: "Behold, you blessed of My Father, behold this man, does he deserve Heaven? Judge ye according to My justice." With one voice the saints will cry out: "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgments are just; Thy longanimity has borne with the crimes of the wicked, now justify Thy honor." Even the heathen who are damned will cry out "Lord, if Thou wilt not damn this Christian who knew Thy will and laws,

and who nevertheless scorned the means of obtaining Thy mercy, we will eternally curse Thy injustice." Aye, the poor sinner himself, now seeing all things in their true light, must confess and say: Lord, Thy judgments are just, I have deserved my lot, Thy holy gospel announced it, Thy holy cross had proclaimed it, my own conscience acknowledges it, Thy judgments are just, and if I am now condemned to a pool of everlasting fire, I receive only what I deserve.

The eternal judge will then pass judgment, the terrible, everlasting, irrevocable judgment: "Depart from Me, ye cursed," Whereto? "Into everlasting fire." Matt. 25, 41. Into the fire which you have kindled for yourself by your sins; into the fire which burns eternally, into everlasting fire. Terrible thought! It ought to suffice to freeze the blood in our veins. The thought of eternal punishment has wrought more conversions, perhaps, than any other truth expressed in holy scripture. The thought caused David to tremble in his marble palace, as well as Augustine in the lascivious world, Jerome in the desert, Arsenius in the cave.

Hell, and eternity of punishment, are often the only words which can turn the sinner's heart when all others fail. Hence, God admonishes the preachers of His gospel "You, my priests, raise your voice, inflame your zeal and incessantly sound the trumpet which will, in the last day, call all men to judgment. Like Jeremias went to the public squares in Jerusalem, go you and announce the terrible judgment which in the last day will cast the sinner into the abyss of hell, the judgment which the sinner himself will acknowledge as just "Depart from Me, ye cursed into everlasting fire."

This commandent, my dear brethren, I have fulfilled, and I trust, relying on the Divine mercy that it has not been in vain. I hope and pray to God that none of us will, with open eyes, cast himself into hell, which terrible fate will be attributable to his fault, and to his alone. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION IN TIME.

"To-day if you hear the voice of the Lord, do not harden your hearts." Ps. 94, 8.

DURING the time of advent our holy mother, the Church, admonishes us to walk in the path of penance. We should heed the admonition of St. Paul: Put off the old man, that is, old habits of sin and assume the new man, that is, a life of sincerity or truth, according to the divine law of Christ. Oh, that we would heed this admonition of the Church, this voice of grace! For what more important what more necessary work can exist than the salvation of our soul, the preservation from hell, the attainment of eternal happiness! Worldly affairs can be carried on through the agency of others. We can always procure a laborer to perform our work, a representative to transact our business; a lawyer to plead our case; but we can secure no substitute, no one to say our prayers, to confess our

sins, in a word to lead a good and pious life for us, and to appear for us before the judgment-seat of God. For this is our own affair, this is a business to which no one can attend except ourselves. The most lukewarm sinner will acknowledge that his first duty is to save his soul, but he persuades himself that, when the end of time comes for him he will certainly repent, as he desires most earnestly to leave this world in peace and union with God.

Now, my dear friend, are you certain that you can attend to your salvation later? Have you received any special revelation from God to this effect? Certainly not. Now consider, if day after day, year after year, in every part of the habitable globe untold numbers of your fellow men die suddenly, how can you be certain that you will not meet with a similar fate? Is it impossible that at your death-bed you will be brought before the judgment-seat of God, without preparation, without confession or the reception of the sacraments? Is it not only not impossible, but very possible and God alone knows if this doom is not awaiting you.

Will you then risk your eternal welfare on a possible or probable manner of your death? Is this acting prudently in the most important affair of your life? Are you as careless in important business transactions? Oh, no; in money matters you always chose the safest way, if the matter is left to your own discretion. But should not your immortal soul receive the same consideration as a sum of money, an estate, an investment of some kind which you cannot take into eternity, but the use of which you have only for a limited space of time? Heed, O careless Christian, the warning of God in Eccles. "My son," 3, 19 "Say not I have sinned and what harm has befallen me . . . Say not, the mercy of the Lord is great . . . Delay not to be converted to the Lord and defer it not from day to day, for His wrath shall come on a sudden and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee." Eccles. 5, 4–10. Consider the solemn admonition of our Lord, Who proclaims death to us at one time in the form of a master, who suddenly returns from a journey, surprising the whole household; at another time as

a bridegroom appearing unexpectedly, then again in the form of a thief entering at the hour of midnight taking everything to be found as his booty. Verily, the uncertainty of the time of death is shown most conspicuously in such parables, and hence our Lord adds the solemn warning "Watch ye therefore" and "be ye also ready, because at what hour you know not the Son of man will come." Matt. 24, 42, 44.

Supposing, however, that the impenitent sinner will have time to repent at his deathbed, will he make use of this time and be converted? Alas, sad experience teaches us the contrary. Whilst death is gradually approaching, the sinner plans for the future. Every day his condition becomes more critical; the physician expresses doubt of the patient's recovery, and at last a friend reminds him of his dangerous condition and suggests his reconciliation with God. The suggestion is waived as a sign of overstrained anxiety, the very thought makes him feel stronger and in a few days he will recover, besides, to send for the priest would cause unnecessary commotion. The patient's

condition continues to grow worse, however, and at last the dying sinner consents to send for the minister of God. The priest arrives, but alas, what does he find? The patient in the struggle of death, his eyes broken, his mind wandering, confused or unconscious. The priest does all in his power, but he returns home with a heavy heart fearing that the time of grace has passed for the departing soul. As the unfortunate sinner during his whole life has been deaf to all warnings of his conscience, deaf to all divine inspirations and has frivolously squandered the grace of God, it is greatly to be feared that now the terrible word of God will be verified: "Then they shall call upon Me, and I will not hear, they shall rise in the morning, and shall not find Me." Prov. I, 28.

There is but one true and sincere death-bed conversion mentioned in Holy Scripture, it is that of the penitent thief on the cross, and the Fathers of the Church say that even to him this inestimable grace would not have been given, had he not been sprinkled with the precious blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, hanging alike on the cross. St.

Augustine, therefore, justly observes: "If you will be converted now, I can promise you everything, if you will be converted on your death-bed I can promise you nothing." St. Gregory the Great, holds as his conviction that penance begun only at the hour of death must generally be continued in hell.

Terrible words! Should they not move every fibre of our heart, and impel us on to work out our salvation now when there is still time! Oh, yes, let us delay no longer in returning to the Lord, for we know not what the morrow may bring. "To-day if you shall hear His voice harden not your hearts." Ps. 94, 8, says the Lord. Let us therefore accept the loving invitation of the Church asking us to reconcile ourselves with God. Let us, by a good sincere confession receive the bridal garment of grace, and keep it pure and unsullied during our whole life, so that in it we may confidently approach the judgment-seat of God. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

JOY AND GRATITUDE IN ANTICIPATION OF THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY.

"Rejoice in the Lord always: again I say rejoice . . . The Lord is nigh."
Philip. 4, 4.

IN the epistle of to-day, the Church, in the words of the apostle St. Paul, bids us to rejoice and be glad. "Rejoice in the Lord, again I say rejoice the Lord is nigh." Only a few more days and we will see Him again. Welcome and adore Him, our dearly beloved Saviour and Redeemer in the manger. Every good child rejoices on the anniversary of his parents' birthdays, for after God, they are our greatest benefactors. But an immeasurably greater joy should fill our hearts in anticipation of the birth of Him, who, nineteen hundred years ago, was made Flesh and appeared among us, for He loved us more than the kindest of fathers; made greater sacrifices for us than the best of mothers. His infinite love for us induced Him to leave the throne of His glory and

descend into this vale of tears; He hid His majesty, clothing Himself with our mortality, and placed Himself as the poorest, most destitute and helpless of children, in a manger, so that we, who were lost through sin, may not perish, but be saved and obtain eternal glory. Oh, miracle of divine love and mercy! The infinite Immortality becomes mortal, so that we, who became subject to eternal death, may obtain life everlasting. The Omnipotent, to whom Heaven and earth belong, assumed the greatest poverty, so that we, who by sin have fallen into the direst poverty, may be enriched by His heavenly gifts. The infinite Perfection subjected Himself to pain, sufferings and death, to save us who deserved hell, from everlasting pain. All that we are, all that we have, all that can make us happy in time and eternity; — for all this we must be thankful to the divine Infant whose birthday we shall soon celebrate.

How our hearts should beat with gratitude and love in anticipation of His coming! But we should not only rejoice at His advent, but show our gratitude by following His

loving invitation, by receiving Him into our hearts in holy Communion. See, he calls to us in the words of Holy Scripture, "Behold, I stand at the gate and knock, if any man shall hear my voice and open to Me the door I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me." Apoc. 3, 20. Verily, Jesus desires to sup with us, to unite Himself to our souls in the sacrament of love, the Blessed Eucharist. Let us therefore prepare our hearts as a worthy throne for His grace. Purify it by a good confession, cleanse it by a sincere contrition, and a true amendment of life. Let us adorn it with that holy, efficacious love, which does not merely say: O God, I love Thee, but which above all things keeps God's commandments, for "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." John 14, 21. In all our thoughts, our words, our works, our actions, our pains and sufferings we should have but one motive, and that is to please God and perform His holy will. Let us resolve for the love of Jesus to overcome the sinful inclinations of our heart, to avoid the dangerous

and proximate occasions of sin, and bravely keep away from the great mass who follow the wide road to perdition. Out of love for Jesus let us resolve to perform religiously and conscientiously the duties of our state of life. Out of love for Jesus, let us above all keep His greatest commandment, the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves, to love even our enemies, to think and to speak well of them and to do good to them whenever and wherever we can. In a word let us, according to the admonition of St. Paul, put on our Lord Jesus Christ, follow Him, make ourselves conformable to Him so that we can truly say "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in Me." Gal. 2, 20.

But above all things let us gladden the Infant Jesus by our charity towards our needy brethren. The poor shepherds who had not the goods of this world gave Him their hearts. The wise men from the East, besides giving Him their hearts, also brought Him their costly treasures. Let each, therefore, bring to the Divine Infant his gifts, according as heaven has bestowed them upon him, not to Jesus personally, but to

our needy brethren, by assisting them according to our means, for of these Christ has said, "Amen I say to you as long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me." Matt. 25, 40.

Let us then, especially in these last days before Christmas, as a worthy preparation for this great feast show our gratitude to our Divine Saviour by our charity towards the poor and indigent, by our fervor in prayer, by frequenting the sacraments, by earnest exertion in acquiring virtue, and striving after Christian perfection. Then truly He, whose advent in the manger we anticipate with love and acts of mercy, will also in His second advent on the judgment-seat call us with love and mercy to the heavenly mansions prepared for us, and invite us to partake with His angels of the celestial banquet in heaven. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE MALICE OF SIN.

"Make straight the way of the Lord."
John 1, 23.

ON the banks of the Jordan, the great forerunner of Christ raises his powerful voice, preaching salutary penance, to prepare the world for the coming of the Redeemer. During this holy season of Advent the Church also forcibly appeals to us for conversion, change of heart, and amendment of life, so that this, the greatest feast of religion—Christmas—will be for us all, a feast of grace and divine blessings. And, indeed, we should cheerfully listen to the voice of God as enunciated through the mouth of His Church, cheerfully open our hearts to receive His holy grace if we would only consider seriously the malice of sin and the heinous ingratitude with which we requite God's infinite love for man.

"Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear O earth, for the Lord hath spoken, I have brought

up children, and exalted them, but they have despised Me. The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his crib, but Israel hath not known Me, and my people have not understood." Isaias 1, 3.

Alas! cannot this sorrowful complaint be also applied to us? Answer me, O sinner, is not God your father? Has He not created you and brought you forth from nothingness? Has He not watched you as the apple of His eye, protecting you in a thousand dangers of body and soul? Does not every piece of bread which you eat come from Him? Are not all things, whatever you have, whatever you are, gifts of His paternal love? And such a God and father you do not even desire to know, are unwilling to serve and do not wish to love! you, His child!

He gave you commandments, not as a tyrant who enacts laws for his own benefit, but He commanded you as a father who loves you and seeks only your welfare. And you answer your God and say: "I despise your commandments, I deny you obedience, I serve you not." See, your God desires to

make you happy not only here in this world but also in the world to come. Eternally, you should inhabit the heavenly mansions, eternally, partake of His own infinite glory, clothed in resplendent effulgence, chanting before His throne the glorious Alleluia. But you, ungrateful wretch, say to your God: "I renounce Heaven with its joys, I despise its glory. I will have no part in it." God threatens you with hell, an abode of woe and despair, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished" where "the smoke of their torments shall ascend up forever and ever, neither have they rest day nor night." And you, insolent wretch, answer God by your impenitence: "I scorn Thy torments, I defy Thy threats, I will not cease to be Thy adversary and will continue to despise Thee."

But to save you from sin and the everlasting flames of hell, the only begotten Son of the eternal Father descends from the throne of his majesty, descends into this valley of tears, is laid in a manger. During thirty-three years He permits Himself to be scorned and reviled by ungrateful men, and

at last, sacrifices His life for you, shedding His precious blood and dying in torments for you on the cross. Could the God of infinite love do more for you, in order to move your heart to reciprocate His love? And you, O hardened sinner, instead of showing your gratitude and love to Jesus, enter the ranks of His murderers and trample upon His precious blood. By every mortal sin you commit, you take up the scourge, the crown of thorns, the nails that pierced His hands and feet and renew His sufferings and bitter passion. O detestable ingratitude, which no words can describe! Had any one saved your life or your liberty by means of expending a few dollars, you would be grateful to him during the remainder of your life. Your God, however, has saved your soul from hell, by shedding His own precious blood and by giving up His life for you, and you have no love, no gratitude for Him, nothing but scorn, contempt and shameful insult. Ah, has not our Lord just cause to speak to you through the mouth of the Prophet Isaias "I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised Me." Is. 1, 3.

Notwithstanding the greatness of your iniquity, God did not cease to be your father. He could have anihilated you, could have cast you into hell, but still He spared you. He could have abandoned you, as you have abandoned Him, but He did not do so, on the contrary, He waits with infinite mercy to see if you will not seriously reflect and turn from your evil ways. God not only awaits you, but, like a compassionate father, He follows you, His prodigal son, in your evil ways and pleads with you to return and to save your soul by penance. He assures you by His divine word that he will not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. He opens His arms to embrace you, to give you the kiss of peace and to press you to His paternal bosom, to re-instate you into the father's house and into the heirship of heaven. Yes, even the angels in heaven are awaiting your return and penance, to celebrate a festival of rejoicing.

O sinner, let your heart be touched and spurn no longer God's infinite love and mercy. Return to your heavenly Father by a true conversion and earnest amendment of

life. By a good confession, become again a child of God and an heir of heaven. Let us not forget, my dear brethren, that we are all poor sinners, and hence without exception let us implore God's forgiveness and mercy for our sins. Let us resolve, by a life of fidelity in the service of God, to make satisfaction for our former transgressions. Let us battle in earnest against the devil, the world and concupiscence; let us wage war against all evil inclinations and wicked passions, make straight every thing that is crooked in our heart, and plane all that is rough, so that according to the promise given in the gospel of this Sunday, we shall see the salvation of God. Amen.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

CHRIST IS SET FOR THE FALL OF MANY.

"Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel. Luke 2, 34.

While considering the words of that venerable servant of God, Simeon, must we conclude that the joy which we experienced,

when we received the message of the angel on Christmas night, has come so suddenly to an end? God's messenger assured us that the child born in the stable of Bethlehem, is the Saviour of the world and to-day the prophet Simeon tells us that the same child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel! For the fall! Oh, terrible word! Did Christ not come to seek and to save the souls that were lost? Oh, yes truly He came for that purpose, but alas! many, yes, the majority do not wish to find a Saviour in Jesus, they would rather go to perdition than to be happy with Him in Heaven, hence the divine Infant cannot be the cause of their resurrection notwithstanding that He desires it earnestly, He is set for their fall, a terrible fall into eternal perdition, caused not by Christ, but by their own perversity.

Who are they who thus prepare so terrible a lot for themselves? They are, in the first place, those blinded and hard-hearted sinners who wish to know nothing of penance and reconciliation with God. Their soul is lifeless like a stiffened corpse. They have lost

their sight, for they no longer see the abyss of hell yawning beneath their feet, and into which they may fall at any moment. They have lost their hearing, for they are deaf to any inspirations of grace, or to the warning voice of conscience. They have lost their sense of feeling, for they cannot be moved, neither by the love of God, nor by His threats of vengeance. Oh, deplorable condition into which sinners may be cast by their perversity! Nothing but a miracle of grace can save them from destruction. During their life they will have no contrition for their sins, therefore they must repent of them forever in hell. Here on earth they will not undergo a slight penance, therefore they must endure it in hell, eternally lamenting and despairing in the dreadful pool of fire, the place of punishment prepared by the Eternal Justice.

The divine Infant cannot be a Saviour to the hard-hearted and perverted sinners; he can neither save the sinners, who say they do not wish to be lost, yet by their procrastination mock at penance. How great is not the number of these lukewarm Christians?

Who can count the multitude who go to confession to procure, as it were, a license for a return to sin! From their youth they drag the chains of their vices throughout their whole life, and remain after a hundred confessions the same drunkards and adulterers. Every year they promise to restore their ill-gotten goods, every year they promise to give up their old enmity, or their sinful connections, and to this present hour they have made no determined effort once for all to carry it into effect. My dear Christians, let me ask you, can such negligence be a disposition that will reconcile a sinner to God? No, it is nothing but a pretence without truth, like a shell without a kernel, a house built on sand, such negligence cannot be called a reconciliation with God, but a mockery of God's mercy. For such, merely nominal Christians, Christ came not for their resurrection, but will be set for their fall.

There is also another class of Christians who do not mock God's infinite mercy and sanctity, neither by their continued perversity nor by their procrastinated conversion,

who on the contrary are considered in the eyes of the world rather as models of virtue and who, unfortunately, esteem themselves as such, and yet their justice is nothing but a delusion and self-deception. It is true they say many prayers, are members of sodalities and other pious associations, but their lips, that were piously engaged in prayer, are immediately afterwards open to curse and to blaspheme, or engaged in backbiting, talking scandal and destroying their neighbor's reputation. They never fail to attend the Holy Sacrifice of Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, sometimes even they go to Mass and devotion on week days, but from the church they go to the saloons, get drunk and carry on the most shameful conversation, using scurrilous language, thus scandalizing and destroying the virtuous hearts of their youthful auditors. They kneel, perhaps, before the Christmas crib and pray to the King of peace. But in their homes, there is no peace, nothing but strife and contention. They give alms to the poor, but whilst one hand bestows a dime in charity, the other, robs his neighbor of dollars by fraud

and deception. Tell me, is this true piety or is it not rather pharisaical hypocrisy? Can the divine Infant give His blessing to such Christians or must He not rather exclaim: O poor deluded Christian, "If thou also hadst known and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thy eyes." Luke 19, 42.

Oh, no, my dear brethren, let us not deceive ourselves, if we will not renounce sin and live for justice, we shall have no place in Christ's kingdom, the angels announced no peace for us, for then we are not men of good will. Hence let us in truth and sincerity, cast off the old garment of sin and renounce all malice and deceit, all sinful habits and wicked passions. Let us open our hearts to Jesus by a sincere and good confession and prepare it for Him as a permanent throne whence He shall never be expelled by sin, but reign there forever. Then we will have joy in life, peace in death, and happiness in eternity. Then our Saviour will not have come for our fall, but for our resurrection, our glorious, everlasting resurrection on the last day. Amen.

SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR.

THE CELESTIAL CHANAAN.

"Arise and take the Child and His Mother and go into the land of Israel." Matt. 2, 20.

THE angel's announcement that the tyrant Herod has died and the command to return to their own country and people, must have filled the hearts of Mary and Joseph with joy. For many years they had been banished and compelled to live among idolatrous people, who knew nothing of the true God, and whose habits and customs were abhorrent in their eyes. But now, they were to return into the land of Israel, into Chanaan, that land for which their forefathers sighed in the desert for forty years, that land flowing, as it were, with milk and honey, that land the scene of so many works of God. Although the land of Chanaan was so beautiful that the Israelites imagined they had taken possession of a part of paradise, yet there is a more beautiful Chanaan to which the journey of our life leads us; it is the Chanaan above the starry firmament,

where the angels dwell and where the infinite goodness of God has prepared an eternal habitation for his children.

If you ask me to describe the beauties of this promised land I must confess that my feeble words are inadequate to perform the task; and if I could speak the tongues of men and of angels, still I would fail. The apostle St. John, who received a glimpse of the mysteries of the heavenly Chanaan, describes it under the figure of a beautiful city. The streets were of gold, the walls of brilliant crystals, and the twelve gates of the city were each made of precious pearls. "And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof and the Lamb." Apoc. 21, 22. In this heavenly Jerusalem our Lord assures us that "the just shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Matt. 23, 43. Consider, my dear brethren, myriads of suns, oh! what a scene of splendor and glory must it be, and amidst this ocean of light, in this holy celestial Sion, refulgent in glory, we shall dwell with the choirs of angels, with the multitude of the elect, we

shall be as brothers and sisters; they will love us with a pure, heavenly, fraternal love; moreover, we shall live with Mary, the immaculate Mother, and with her divine Son, our Saviour, our Lord and God. There, in those heavenly mansions of peace and rest, we shall be re-united to those dear ones, whom the cold hand of death separated from us, and at whose final departure we wept so bitterly. There, inseparably united with them, clothed in resplendent garments of glory, we shall stand before the throne of God, singing the hymns of honor, glory and benediction. Apoc. V. 12. There with the angels at the heavenly banquet, we shall rest in the paternal bosom of the Eternal Father, rest from the cares and tribulations of our earthly pilgrimage, forgetting all pains and sorrows, free from everything that can afflict the heart. Oh, consoling promise, which faith guarantees us in the beautiful words of the apocalypse "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away." Apoc.

21, 4. for "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth now, saith the Spirit, they shall rest from their labors, for their works follow them." Apoc. 14, 13. Oh, tell me, my dear Christians, if the end of all earthly woe and sorrow constituted the only promise of reward, would not that alone make our hearts exult with joy and gladness?

And yet, my dear brethren, I have thus far considered only the least of Heaven's joys. But where shall I find words that could express the nature of that Heavenly bliss which our divine Saviour has promised us in these words "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God." Matt. 5, 8. Yes, to see God face to face, to know, as we are known, that constitutes the happiness of Heaven. It is the beatific vision which engulfs us in the immensity of bliss. Here on earth we, indeed, know God, but only by the light of faith. Here we see His works and admire them with sentiments of profound reverence, but the Creator of all these works, our mortal eyes cannot see. However, if we persevere in the love and service of God, the veil will soon be withdrawn from

our eyes. When the bell tolls our departure from this world and ushers us into the eternal Sabbath, then we shall see God, our greatest Good, no longer by the light of faith, no longer in the mirror of His creation, but face to face in the splendor of His glory, in the immensity of His Majesty, and seeing God, we shall love and possess Him forever and in this love and possession of God, we shall be filled with streams of eternal bliss which flow from the ocean of divine felicity. I can no more picture to you the greatness of this happiness than a blind man can comprehend the beauties of a masterpiece of art. On Mt. Tabor St. Peter saw only a few rays of the glory of Christ and yet he was so overcome with emotions of joy and happiness that he wished to remain forever there with our Lord on the holy mountain. St. Paul was rapt into the third heaven and saw only a glimpse of its glory and the happiness of the elect, but awakening from the vision, he found no words to express the glory he had seen, but could only exclaim "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what

things God hath prepared for them that love Him." I. Cor. 2, 9.

Oh! immensity of glory, Oh! ocean of bliss and joy that awaits the true and faithful laborer in the vineyard of the Lord, a reward that has been assured to him by the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. How should not our heart rejoice and be glad at the thought of Heaven, how should it not long and desire for the heavenly home, its true fatherland in the land of the angels. But our Lord says "The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." Matt. 11, 12. "For many are called, but few are chosen." Matt. 22, 14. Let us, therefore fight the good fight, battle and labor, make any sacrifice in order to enter this kingdom, to purchase this pearl and to gain the crown of victory. Let us trod in the footsteps of the saints and follow our Lord as true disciples in the way of the cross, of self-denial and abnegation. Let us fearlessly profess our faith and faithfully live according to its precepts, so that the celestial land of Israel will be our eternal habitation. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY.

"And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men."
Luke II, 52.

THIS is a summary of the life of Jesus from His youth until His thirtieth year. "Jesus advanced in wisdom and grace with God and men. More the Evangelists do not relate concerning the youth of our Lord. Little as it is, however, it is so instructive, so edifying, that you will, no doubt exclaim: Would that all our children followed this divine example! that as they advance in age, they would also advance in grace and wisdom, with God and men. On you, principally, O parents, it depends whether this wish will be realized. In a great measure it rests with you whether your children will be objects of pleasure or of disgrace in the sight of God and men for time and eternity; whether they will be saints in Heaven or reprobates in hell. A great deal

depends on the parents, for as they rear and educate their children now, so they will be hereafter. Ah, dear parents, from this moment consider seriously what a holy and responsible duty is imposed upon you.

What is the real duty of parents? God has given you a treasure, a thousand times more valuable in His eyes, than all the gold, silver and precious stones in the world; a treasure which He Himself has purchased with His own blood; for this pearl of great price He hesitated not to sacrifice His life on the cross. By this valuable gift is meant your innocent child, washed in the blood of the Lamb, sanctified in the blood of the redemption, the brightest and most beautiful image and likeness of God. You must guard well this treasure lest God should be deprived of it. You must protect this gem, see that it will not be tarnished, or if, unfortunately, it has lost its luster, that its brightness be restored as soon as possible. Oh, can you be sufficiently diligent, sufficiently watchful and prudent in complying worthily with the duties and obligations in which even the angels are involved?

Woe to you if you neglect this holy and responsible duty, thus causing the loss of your child's immortal soul. How sinfully you act towards God who has called you to so honorable a position, how criminally towards society which you increase with wicked, godless individuals; how wickedly, yes, how diabolically, against your own flesh and blood; for you deprive it of its temporal and eternal happiness. In this life you cast your child into woe and misery and in the life to come, you plunge it into eternal perdition. What a terrible thought! If one of your children by your carelessness or bad example or by your not being sufficiently watchful over it, would be eternally lost, then, a child of God, an heir of Heaven would thereby become an enemy of God and a slave of Satan. Through your fault its innocent soul would have been murdered and for it, the precious blood of the Son of God shed in vain. Through you the most beautiful image and likeness of God would have been defaced, the temple of the Holy Ghost defiled by the abomination of sin. Ah, what a fearful responsibility!

But even this may not be the full measure of your crime. God alone knows how much woe and misery your corrupted child may bring upon others. Even in its youth, how many innocent children may it not seduce and lead to eternal destruction! As it advances in years, it will grow in wickedness, and the danger will increase in proportion for all its companions. Your child will, perhaps, be engaged as a servant. Woe to the innocent children of a family, employing a wicked servant—woe to the fellow servants —woe to the whole household. After many scandals, after having corrupted and destroyed many souls, your child may enter the holy bonds of matrimony. What kind of a companion will so corrupt a nature seek! Will it not be one equally criminal? Yes, birds of a feather flock together. What deplorable results for society will not such a union bring! for what kind of an education will such parents give their children! And thus the vices of the parents will be inherited by, and transmitted to children's children for generations. And of all this woe and misery you will be the cause. God will hold

you responsible, you will be made accountable for the crimes and scandals, because you laid the foundation for all these sins, by the neglect of your parental duties. And in consequence of this terrible guilt, what can you expect? Nothing but tears and misery in this life, despair in the hour of death and hell for all eternity.

Christian parents, should you not be filled with fear and trembling at the very thought that so dreadful a fate may be your portion? Should you not prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament, and with heart and soul pray to your Divine Saviour: O God, I most sincerely promise, yes, I solemnly vow that with the assistance of Thy divine grace I will do everything that is in my power, to keep my children pure, innocent, pious and God-fearing. I will spare no labor that they may learn to know Thee, to serve Thee and to love Thee. I will watch over them and guard them from evil companions, bad associates, and will never permit them to be exposed to sinful temptations. Oh, yes, dearly beloved parents, if the last spark of faith has not been extinguished in your hearts,

you will certainly pray thus to God, and will also act accordingly. But for those parents who have hardened their hearts against these fearful considerations, for them I have no further words of admonitions, I have only a prayer for their poor children and this prayer is: O God, Thou who art infinitely just, take the millstone with which Thou threatenest every one who scandalizes one of these little ones, and hang it around the neck of these murderers of souls. Permit them to-day rather than to-morrow, for it is better that two such monsters of iniquity go alone to hell, than that through them whole generations of innocent souls will be damned. A fearful prayer, my dear Christians, and yet I say it with all possible fervor. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

CONSIDERATION BEFORE MARRIAGE.

"And Jesus was also invited, and His disciples, to the marriage." John 2, 2.

HAPPY were the bride and bridegroom mentioned in the gospel of to-day, happy indeed, and highly privileged souls, to entertain Jesus and Mary, His mother, as guests at their marriage feast. On this occasion our Lord, through the intercession of His blessed mother, wrought His first miracle, and from the fact of His Omnipotence, thus contributing to the greater festivity of the marriage feast, we may justly conclude that the bride and bridegroom were the recipients of many spiritual favors. All those who enter the holy state of matrimony may become partakers of similar privileges, if they would also invite Jesus and Mary to their nuptial banquet. They come most willingly to attend the marriage of a pious and God-fearing couple—not in a visible manner as was done nineteen centuries ago

—but in an invisible manner by bestowing the same treasures of graces and blessings. But, unfortunately, at too many marriage celebrations our Lord and His blessed mother are not desired, the doors are closed against them, because a union is about to be contracted for which God can have no blessing. They are also frequently closed on account of sins committed during the time of betrothal, thus calling forth the just condemnation of God.

Whosoever intends to enter the matrimonial state, must first prove himself, to ascertain if he is called to this state of life, if he is able to fulfil its duties and obligations, and if he can bear its burdens. When one is about to engage in a profession or undertake an important affair, do not these considerations form the subject of serious reflection? This being the case, how much more should those reflect who are about to contract a union, which involves the happiness of time and probably that of eternity! A blind man will not devote himself to painting and a deaf man to music, for their common sense tells them that they are unfit for these

arts. With matrimony alone, this important state of life, upon which depends the weal or woe of a life-time, yea, which often decides the state for all eternity, these serious reflections are cast aside, and all prudence and foresight are cast to the winds. How many there are who blindly and recklessly enter this holy state, although they are warned to the contrary, although they are told by persons of experience and wisdom that they have not the necessary qualifications to perform the onerous duties of the marriage state, although their own conscience tells them that they are not called to this state of life. Or is it not blindness for persons to betroth themselves when their condition of health renders them unfit for a happy family life? Again, is it not the height of absurdity and recklessness of others, to think of marriage when their advanced age should rather remind them of the grave? Is it not madness for boys who have not passed the years of indiscretion, who cannot even support themselves, much less a family, to think of marrying, or when girls, well acquainted with the latest styles,

but absolutely ignorant of the first principles of household duties, who perhaps, know how to sweep into a ball room, but not to sweep a room, who can adjust their hats according to the latest fashion, but who can set no table, prepare no meals, is it not worse than foolish for them to enter the marriage state? It requires no prophet to foretell the future of such a union. The bonds of matrimony become chains of misery. My dear Christians, if you do not wish to run blindly into misfortune, then reflect seriously if you are sufficiently qualified for marriage, that is, if you have arrived at the proper age, enjoy the necessary health, have sufficient experience, are able to support a family or conduct a household, and if you have acquired the principles of morality and stability of character. If you find you do not possess these requisites, do not think of matrimony, for Jesus and Mary cannot accept an invitation to your marriage feast.

If, after serious reflection before God and your own conscience, you have reasons to believe that you are called to this state of life then use the utmost care in selecting

your consort. Before engaging a servant, you ask for recommendations, inquire about his or her habits, lest you should take a thief, sluggard or villain into your family circle in place of a trustworthy servant. Should you have been deceived, the evil would not be great, for you could, at any time, discharge the servant. It is different, however, with matrimony, when once you have been united in these holy bonds, there is no power on earth that can sever them for "what God hath joined together" says Holy Writ "let no man put asunder." You may weep and lament, the tie remains, death alone can dissolve the union. Oh, what care should not every Christian bestow upon this selection. What fervent prayer should be offered to God by those who intend to decide upon the choice of a consort for life. Besides receiving good counsel from pious parents and experienced persons, they must use their own judgment and study well each others habits and dispositions. If your choice should fall upon one not of your faith or if you discover him to be a drunkard, a spendthrift, an idler, a gambler or a scoffer

at religion, make it your principle to sever the connection, for he who does not love God will not love you; one who will not practice his or her religion will not make you happy. But, alas! how often are not the counsels of Christian prudence thrown carelessly to the winds! One contracts a mixed marriage, another thinks only of beauty or money, a third has only passion for a motive and attempts to build a temple of wedded bliss on the foundation of carnal desires. He paves the way to the bridal altar with vices and then expects God's blessing. If the result of such marriages is unhappiness, where lies the fault? If those frivolous persons come afterwards in their misery for consolation what shall we answer them? They deserve naught but the reply: You fool, why do you lament, it is your own fault. Who chose for you such a man, such a woman? It was not God, for you did not consult Him in your prayer. Not your parents, for you listened not when they counseled you and entreated you with tears to break off the engagement. You must now bear the burden of your own folly,

you must bear the consequences of your own foolishness and endure the misery of your own selection.

Be warned, O Christian youth, remember that your temporal, and perhaps eternal happiness depends on the choice you make. Do not make this solemn engagement carelessly, but only after prayerful consideration. Do not be guided by pride or vanity or personal attraction only, but by moral worth. Do not permit yourself to be blinded by passion, overlooking vices in the hope of reforming them later. Have nothing to do with scoffers at religion and enemies of your holy faith. Pray to God, invoke the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, your patron saint and your guardian angel; ask their guidance in your choice, so that you may never regret it. During the time of your betrothal, live in innocence and in the fear of God, avoid all dangerous occasions of sin, pray earnestly and frequent the sacraments. Jesus and Mary will come to your marriage feast only when you have acted according to these admonitions, and when your choice is such that it will call down the benediction of Heaven. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE ABUSE OF THE TONGUE.

"See thou tell no man." Matt. 8, 4.

WHAT an example of humility does not our Divine Lord give us in the gospel of to-day, but at the same time what an evidence of power and might! He speaks but a word, and behold, the dreadful disease disappears. He seeks not His own glory, however, and hence tells the leper who was now cleansed "See thou tell no man." Scripture does not mention whether this man complied with our Lord's request in keeping the secret. Daily experience teaches us that the great multitude do not guard their tongues, but that, on the contrary, they bring untold misery upon themselves and others by the inconsiderate use they make of them.

The apostle St. James raises his warning voice against the abuse of the tongue, and complains in the following solemn words (III 3–10) "For if we put bits into the

mouths of horses that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body. Behold also ships, whereas they are great, and are driven by strong winds, yet they are turned about with a small helm, whithersoever the force of the governor willeth. So the tongue also is indeed a little member and boasteth great things. Behold how small a fire what a great wood it kindleth? And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is placed among our members, which defileth the whole body, and inflameth the wheel of our nativity, being set on fire by hell. For every nature of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of the rest, is tamed and hath been tamed by the nature of man: But the tongue no man can tame: an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison. By it we bless God and the Father: and by it we curse men, who are made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing." Solemn words, indeed, my dear Christians, but just, for the apostle plainly declares the true state of affairs when he mourns over the evil which a wicked tongue is capable of doing. Look

around and you will daily find evidence of the injury done by a frivolous and ungovernable tongue.

Take for instance a dissolute man employed in a workshop where there are a number of laborers, old and young. Whenever he makes use of the gift of speech, it is only to pour forth a flood of blasphemies and filthy, impious language, thus giving evidence of the thoughts and desires which fill his heart. Every word is either double meaning or actually immoral, his insinuations impious, his jokes reek with scurrility. The inexperienced youth eagerly swallow this filth and are thus initiated in the dreadful mysteries of impurity. Very soon, their delicate sense of virtue becomes blunted, in a short time they lose the abhorrence they feel at first, they become familiar with the subject, soon listen with pleasure, and finally repeat the same, foul language. Let me ask you, could the devil do worse, if he appeared visibly to enslave the unguarded youth in his diabolical snares, than such a scandal-giver and murderer of souls does every day. Count, if you can, the number

of sins which so shameless an individual introduces, and hands down to posterity, and you will exclaim: How incalculably great is the mischief and wickedness which emanates from such a workshop, or factory and floods the whole congregation!

To obtain a faint idea of the harm done by an evil tongue, it suffices to consider the numerous lies, the detractions, the calumnies, the slander and backbitings that daily ascend, like foul fume to Heaven, crying for vengeance. How many intimate friendships have not been broken forever by infamous gossiping! How often have not neighbors been incited against neighbors, parents against children, children against parents, brothers against sisters, husbands against wives and wives against husbands? Their hearts were filled with hatred and, like wild beasts, they would love to tear each other to pieces. How many honest laborers, how many upright merchants have not lost their good name and reputation by vile slanders, and with their good name and reputation, their employment, their fortune, their health and very often their lives.

Verily, with these evil consequences of vile gossip before our eyes, we can understand these solemn words of the Holy Ghost: "Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not so many as have perished by their own tongue." Eccli. 28, 22.

Were we to bear in mind the warning of our Divine Saviour, when He says that He will hold us accountable for every idle word. how carefully should we not weigh our words in the scales of conscience, before uttering them, and how frequently should we not pray with the royal psalmist "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth and a door round about my lips." Ps. 140, 3. Listen to the words of the apostle St. James "If any man offend not in words, the same is a perfect man." St. James 3, 2. We must daily strive after this perfection and avoid all idle gossiping which can scarcely be indulged without sin. Flee from those evil associations, where the devil carries on his immodest language, avoid those meetings of gossipers, where every good name and reputation is pitilessly torn to shreds, and a pit is dug for every neighbor's honor

and happiness, so that you may not, by the bad example, be swept along in the same stream of godless scandal and, by participating, make yourself accessory to the sins of others. Let us ever bear in mind that God has not appointed us as judges of our neighbors, that on the contrary we have sufficient occupation in sweeping before our own doors. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone" at his neighbor. We are all poor sinners, hence judge not, condemn not, do not proclaim your neighbor's faults, but cover them with the mantle of that charity and mercy for which you hope in the last hour, and for which you will then plead so earnestly. "Judge not, and you shall not be judged, condemn not and you shall not be condemned." Luke 6, 37. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

SUFFERINGS, A SIGN OF PREDILECTION.

"Behold a great tempest arose in the sea." Matt. 8, 23.

A TEMPEST at sea is a graphic picture of the storms of suffering and misery which we must undergo during life. When the thunder peals, the lightning flashes amidst rolling billows; when the wind shrieks, as it were; when as the foaming waves rise to mountainous heights leaving behind a yawning abyss that threatens to ingulf the ship that is turned about like a leaf in a whirlwind, then even the sturdiest mariner's cheek blanches, and the fear of death enters his soul. Thus it happens when in the voyage of life, the dark clouds of impending misfortune threateningly gather above, and around us, when disease prostrates us, when poverty and ill-fortune destroy our former prosperity, when all kinds of calamities crowd around us, when the angel of death appears and snatches a

dear one from our midst, then indeed we tremble with a fear, not unlike that of the apostles when they thought they saw a watery grave open to engulf them.

But "Jesus said to them: Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?" Matt. 8, 26. Jesus addresses the selfsame words to us: "Why are you fearful." Why do you fear the weight and the burden of the cross? Is not every trial sent to lead you to God? The world may contradict the statement and attempt to undermine it by a thousand arguments, but nothing is more true. In prosperity and good fortune, we so easily forget God and become oblivious of the end for which we are created, we do not seek our happiness, our heaven above, but are satisfied to find it here on earth, we lose sight of the one thing necessary, namely, the salvation of our immortal souls. During trials and tribulations, however, God and heaven are near us, our helplessness compels us to seek God, to lift up our hearts to Him in anxious supplication, then we try by penance to make ourselves worthy of being heard on account of the despair of our bleeding hearts;

we are compelled to think of the future, to seek that peace which the world with all its promises and allurements cannot give. Who can enumerate the perverted and hardened sinners, who have found the way to God and Heaven in the school of the cross, and who now in the ranks of the holy penitents, stand before the throne of God chanting the eternal hymn of praise! Who can count the number of lukewarm Christians, who, under the scourge of God's tribulations, mounted the heights of perfection and acquired sanctity!

Truly, therefore, did the angel speak to the sorely-tried Tobias: because thou wert beloved by God, this trial had to come upon thee, and St. Paul remarks for our consolation "For whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth, and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Heb. 12, 6.

My dear Christians, does not the whole gospel contain examples wherein those, who suffer with Christ and carry the cross, are called blessed? Do you wish to hear what the saints thought of sufferings? The daily prayer of St. Teresa was: "O Lord, let me

either suffer or die." St. Aloysius, an angel in human form, said "There is no surer mark of predilection than the trials and tribulations sent us by God when we are striving to serve Him. These sufferings are a precious ring with which our Lord espouses a soul whom He loves." St. Chrysostom says "If God grants you the power to work miracles, He truly grants you a great gift, but it is not so great as the one He bestows when He sends you misfortune and suffering. By receiving the power to work miracles, you become indebted to God, but by enduring sufferings, God becomes your debtor, and according to His faithful promise He will give you an eternal reward." How re-assuring and consoling are not these words! should they not encourage us to persevere in the school of Jesus crucified?

Since the fall of Adam, afflictions and sufferings have been our inevitable lot. What will it avail to weep and lament, to groan and complain? No matter what you do, you cannot escape the trials and tribulations of this life. Willingly or unwillingly you must walk the way of the cross. If unwil-

lingly, you double the weight of your burden, offend God and lose merit for Heaven. As Christians, you firmly believe in a future life, in an eternal reward. What can be more reasonable than to sanctify your sufferings by means of the love of God, which lightens every burden, and sweetens every yoke. Sanctify them, by taking as your model Jesus who has suffered so immeasurably for you; sanctify them by meditating on purgatory, which will be lessened by patiently bearing the cross; sanctify them by a firm hope of attaining that Heaven where the angels are preparing for you a glorious, eternal crown of victory. Pope St. Gregory says "We can become martyrs without fire or sword, if we preserve patience and divine charity." What a joy will be ours, if we can justly say: it is true, I have often offended my Lord, but it is now in my power to offer Him sufferings, thus giving Him pleasure. Let us bring Him many gifts of patience and submission to the will of God, and in the hour of death, for our consolation and eternal joy, we shall experience, how truly the apostle St. James spoke

when he said: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life which God hath promised to them that love Him." James 1, 12. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE COCKLE IN CHRIST'S FIELD.

"Wilt thou that we go and gather it up?"
Math. 13, 28.

"SIR, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence then has it cockle? Wilt thou that we go and gather it up?"

Thus did the servants, in great consternation ask. The faithful servants thought not only of sowing good seed in the field, but were anxious to root up the noxious weeds.

My dear Christians, as the cockle was found in the field of the good man of the house, so you also find besides the good wheat many noxious plants in the world, God's beautiful field. By taking a glance at the world, we will find disobedient chil-

dren of good parents, worthless husbands of good wives, peaceable families near quarrelsome neighbors. Alas! what an immense quantity of noxious weeds in the beautiful field of the Lord! How many lukewarm and indifferent Christians, how many infidels how many scoffers at everything holy, how many enemies of the cross, how many persecutors of religion! When contemplating this vast multitude of God's enemies, the just is moved to exclaim with the prophet: "How long, O Lord, shall the enemy reproach? is the adversary to provoke Thy name forever?"

Patience however, my dear Christians, St. Augustine gives this beautiful answer to our prayer: "God is merciful, because He is eternal." So long as man lives in the world, the cockle may be changed into wheat. If at the moment of death, he is still found a weed, notwithstanding all God has done for his conversion, then woe to him, a thousand times woe, for he will then be bound, as the cockle, into bundles and as such thrown into fire, the eternal fire of hell. No one but God can understand what an

eternity of pain signifies, hence, in his infinite mercy, He suffers the weed to grow in the field of His holy Church, and does everything in His power to convert it into wheat. And for this love and mercy of our Heavenly Father, should we not daily offer Him on bended knees our heartfelt thanks! Have we never been a weed in the garden of the Church? And with our fickle nature, can we not at any time become a noxious plant? Now, if our Heavenly Father would root up every weed and cast it into hell as soon as it made its appearance, where then would be our present habitation?

We should not merely admire, laud and extol God's infinite mercy, we should also imitate it. With Christian patience, meekness and charity we should offer to God all offences, insults, which the malice of men hurl against us, and use them as special means for acquiring virtue and advancing in Christian perfection. For the wicked, says St. Augustine, serve the just as the hammer and file the iron; the millstone, the wheat, the heathen persecutors, the Christian martyrs. The God of infinite power and

majesty, the Creator of Heaven and earth permits the wicked daily to blaspheme and insult Him. He could annihilate them or cast them body and soul into hell, but He bears with them with infinite patience, without revenge and anger. And we feel insulted and desire revenge for the least injury, injustice or calumny? Should we not rather accept such wrongs and injuries as penances, and offer them to God in satisfaction for our sins and suffer them as purgatorial expiations? Should we not rather welcome them as occasions for honoring God by the practice of virtues and as a means for meriting eternal reward in Heaven? Let ut imitate the mercy of God. He suffers the weeds to grow in his field, therefore, let us not root them out by revenge. He does all in His power to change the cockle into wheat, hence, let us also exert all the compassion of a noble, true Christian heart, and assist God in His labors for the conversion of sinners. For, says St. James: "My brethren, if any of you err from the truth, and one convert him, he must know, that he who causes a sinner to be converted

from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins." James 5, 19–20.

Oh! let us act in such a manner that these beautiful words may also be applied to us. Let us also cover a multitude of our sins, by striving to bring back our erring brother to the path of virtue, which leads to the road to Heaven. In Christian charity and meekness let us appeal to his conscience, not once, not seven times, but seventy times seven times; let us edify him by our good example, by leading a good Christian life; let us offer our good works for him and pray for him with unremitting fervor. It may be, that all our charitable efforts will prove futile, that we will make no impression on his hardened heart, if this be the case, we may grieve on the sinner's account, but we must not be discouraged, for God, who considers only our good intention, will accept our efforts and good will for the deed, and give us the eternal reward. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE MUSTARD SEED OF HUMILITY.

"The kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed." Matt. 13, 31.

HOW small and insignificant is the mustard seed! A child could hold hundreds of them in his little hand, and yet our Lord deigned to speak of the mustard seed and make use of it in His sermons. From this, my dear brethren, we may learn, not to consider ourselves great, but to remain very little, that is, we must strive after humility. Oh! if we acquired this virtue, we would be in possession of a great prize that would lead us nearer to Heaven.

Have we not good reasons for considering our littleness? We need only to respect truth and acknowledge ourselves to be such as we are in the sight of God, and we certainly must be humble. Our holy faith teaches us a twofold truth which is not of such a nature that we should exalt ourselves. The one is, whatever good man possesses,

he has received from God and not from himself. If you are rich and honored by the world, if you fill an honorable position, if you possess genius or great intellectual faculties: — for all these benefits you must thank your heavenly Father who denied them to millions more deserving, and who at any moment can also deprive you of them. "For who distinguisheth thee?" says the apostle St. Paul, "Or what hast thou, that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" I. Cor. 4, 7.

The second truth which faith teaches us is that not only have we received from God all the good we possess, but without His assistance we can do nothing to attain our salvation. Of ourselves, we have only impotence and weakness. All good comes from above, from the Father of light. The first impulse for doing good comes from Heaven, and also the strength to undertake, to perform, and complete the good work. "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will." Philip 2, 13. Says St. Paul,

explaining what our Lord has taught by the words: "Without me you can do nothing." John 15, 5. Now, if we have received everything from God, if we can begin and accomplish nothing except with God's help and assistance, have we not every reason to bow our head in deep humility?

We have, moreover, another reason for being humble, a very great one, and that is, the enormous guilt of our sins. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." I. John 1, 8. We need only to enter into ourselves, examine the hidden recesses of our heart and we will lament with the psalmist: "My iniquities are gone over my head, and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me." Ps. 37, 5. Examine your conscience and it will surely convince you that even in your childhood, you have destroyed the garment of innocence and cast it at the feet of Satan. In youth, you have defiled your soul by vice and ungodliness and have made your Saviour an object of scorn. Let your conscience speak, and perhaps, it will say, you have profaned the sacraments, those channels of graces,

by an unworthy confession and a sacrilegious Communion, you have neglected the most important duties of your state of life; you have, as father given bad example to your children, and as master scandalized your subjects, and as husband broken the vows which you made before Heaven and earth. Now should not the knowledge of such enormity make you humble, so that on bended knees you will contritely exclaim with the publican in the gospel: "O God be merciful to me a sinner." Luke 18, 13.

Further still, my dear Christians, we must strive after humility, not only on account of our total dependence on God and the enormity of our sins, but because God has commanded us. There is no Christian duty more emphatically and earnestly embodied in Holy Scripture than the practice of humility. Our Lord teaches us in the parable of the proud pharisee and the publican, and in many other instances, that without humility God will hear no prayer, grant no petition, forgive no sins, and permit none to enter Heaven. Without humility, we hope in vain for God's grace, for, says St. Peter:

"God resisteth the proud." I. Peter 5, 5. Hence our Lord repeats "Learn of me." What should we learn of Him? Learn to work miracles? To raise the dead to life or to create a new world? Ah! no, but "Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart." Matt. 11, 29. All the saints who are now enjoying the bliss of Heaven obtained this greatness by humility. Neither shall we enter Heaven, unless, says our Divine Saviour, we become like little children, that is, humble of heart.

Oh, how many and weighty reasons have we not to be little in our own eyes! Our dependence on God, the weight of our sins, and God's holy will demand it. In conclusion, therefore, let me exhort you to follow the admonition of St. Paul: "Not minding high things, but consenting to the humble." Rom. 12, 16. and the advice of St. Basil, "Love humility and it will clothe you with splendor." Led by her hand, you will walk in a straight path to that glory, which is found with God and His holy angels. Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

CONTENTMENT IN A STATE OF LIFE.

"But when the first also came, they thought that they should receive more."
Matt. 20, 10.

NOTHING is more general than the habit of complaining. The one is dissatisfied with his state of life, the other grumbles about his position, a third bewails his poverty, thus, there is no end of complaints against God, because each one thinks, like the laborers in the vineyard, that he should receive more. It is not necessary, however, to consult the teachings of our holy Faith to be convinced that on earth, perfect equality in all things is an impossibility. Common sense will teach us that men can not all be equally prosperous and hold equal positions in society.

Let us suppose that all men are equal in wealth and position. What would become of the world? Who would expose himself to the heat of the sun, and the cold blast of the wind, toiling in the field to obtain a

livelihood? Should the farmer, laborer or servant do this? They would say, we have sufficient wealth to save us from this hard labor. Who would dress the hide, tan the leather and make shoes to protect your feet from the rough roads? Who would spin the yarn, weave the cloth and make the clothes to shield you from the inclemency of the weather? Who would burn the brick, carry the mortar, saw the lumber to build your house, in order that you would not be necessitated, like the Indian on the plains, to dwell in a wigwam. Who would do all this kind of work? The shoemaker, the tailor, the mason, the carpenter, you say, but where would you find one? Riches being equally distributed, all would assuredly let you do your own work. What would be the consequence if such communism, which is advocated by insane demagogues, would be actually introduced? We would gradually fall back into a savage state, into barbarism.

You see plainly, my dear brethren, that a difference in the condition of man is not merely the result of arbitrary dictation, but springs from the very nature and order of

society, and hence must have its foundation in the will of the Creator. Almighty God has allotted to each individual a certain portion of temporal goods, and called each one to a certain state of life, wherein he can labor most beneficially for himself and others, and thus obtain the end for which he was created. In a letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul beautifully exemplified this truth under the following figure: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body: so also is Christ." I. Cor. 12, 14. and St. Paul continues to say: "For the body also is not one member, but many. If the foot should say: Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were the eye: where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing: where would be the smelling? But now God hath set the members, every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him. And if they all were one member, where would be the body? But now there are many members indeed, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the

hand: I need not thy help: nor again the head to the feet: I have no need of you. Yea much more those that seem to be the more feeble members of the body, are more necessary." I. Cor. 12, 14, 23. The meaning of this beautiful illustration, my dear brethren, is, in a few words, as you have perceived, that as no member of the body exists for itself, but all necessarily belong together to form one whole body, each operating and working according to its nature, so also in the great society of mankind, each individual is not created for himself alone, but each is dependent on his fellow men, and each must labor according to his abilities, his condition, and the position which has been assigned him by God. All helping one another and all working for the great common good, each one according to the state of life to which he has been called. Thus the Creator, in His infinite wisdom, has ordained it, and thus the laws of nature enforce it with immutable necessity. If, however, God is, as we have seen, the author of the different conditions and positions of men in society,

then is, also the lowest laborer who faithfully performs his duty, as pleasing and honorable before God, as the greatest scientist, the ablest statesman, the most renowned author, or the man holding the highest and most honorable position in the country; and, what is still more consolatory in his low, humble state of life, he can merit the highest crown of glory, if he labors as a Christian, with God and for God.

The truth of this is visible in the life and condition of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She raised no dead to life, healed no sick, drove out no devils, and did not preach the gospel, but in her humble home at Nazareth, she faithfully fulfilled all the duties of her state of life, as child, spouse, mother, and widow, and thus she became the greatest of all the saints, the most blessed of all the blessed, and now reigns in Heaven as queen of angels and saints. My dear Christians, like Mary, be contented with your humble lot, offer daily to God all the trials and difficulties of your labors, sanctify your work, by remaining in a state of grace, without which there is no reward, and you will certainly, like Mary,

become rich in virtue and merit for Heaven, and even in this vale of tears, you will become rich in contentment and happiness.

It is related of the Roman Emperor Maximus, that, in order not to be idle and thus lose his vigor, he often engaged in wrestling; that a page with a silk handkerchief wiped the sweat from his brow, and gathered it in a golden bowl. Oh! may the drops of sweat, which flow daily, in your labor for the necessities of life, be found worthy to be gathered by your guardian angel, preserved in a golden bowl, and brought to the throne of God for temporal and eternal reward. This will be the case, if you labor with God and for God — with God, that is, as children of God, being in the state of grace, — for God, that is, having made the good intention of doing all things for the greater honor, glory and love of God. Oh! if you labor thus in the vineyard of the Lord, then you need not fear, for He will bless you, and abundantly provide the necessaries of life, and in the hour of your death, He will say: Call the laborers, that they receive their eternal reward. Amen.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

WHY IS THE DIVINE SEED SO OFTEN WITHOUT FRUIT?

"The sower went out to sow his seed."
Luke 8, 5.

A multiplicity of sermons, but little fruit for life everlasting. This is the sad truth which our Lord announces in the gospel of to-day, and which we, ministers of God, who preach the gospel, find verified by sad experience. Does the fault lie in the seed that is sown? Ah! no, the seed is good, for it is God's holy word, but the ground, whereon the seed falls, that is, the heart of the hearers, is not always good.

In order that the word of God may become fruitful in our heart for life eternal, it is absolutely necessary that we receive it in good dispositions, that is, with a sincere desire to be instructed, strengthened, perfected and sanctified. The great fault, however, with many Christians is, that they do not come to hear a sermon hungering after the bread of life,

which is thus broken to them, but, from very different motives. Some come from curiosity, some wish to hear how this or that priest preaches, with the intention of criticising the sermon and ridiculing the poor delivery or peculiarities of the speaker. Others are present from force of habit, they come, because they have always been accustomed to attend the sermon, and because others do so; their parents or superiors insisting on their attending the holy sacrifice of mass, they cannot escape the sermon. These classes of auditors feel considerably fatigued during the sermon, hence they yawn, gaze about, sleep or, perhaps, spend the time in talking and laughing or in other scandalous frivolities. Need we then be surprised if the word of God bring these no blessing, but only a severe account to be rendered? It enters not even the ear, much less the heart. Showing contempt for what is holy in religion, they, by their misbehavior, prevent the well-disposed from listening with devotion. Oh, what a crime, what a judgment is impending on them in the hour of death.

There are some who listen to the sermon

with the greatest attention, but instead of applying to themselves the truth expounded, they most uncharitably refer it only to others. If the priest speaks of some fault, they immediately know whom it concerns. If admonitions are given, they are aware to whom the priest has reference. Truly, such Christians remind me of the waiters at a banquet, they serve others, but partake of nothing themselves. I can find no better comparison than to liken them to a sick person, for whom the physician prescribes some remedy. If, instead of taking the medicine, the sick person gives it to another, will he be benefited by it? Certainly not. Neither can a Christian save his soul, if he applies to another the word of God which speaks to his own heart.

There is still another class of Christians who hear the word of God with the greatest fervor and reverence. It is true, they receive it into their hearts, but they do not retain it. During the sermon, they make good resolutions and their tearful countenance indicates how powerfully the grace and the word of God have affected them,

but the fowls of the air come and steal, and devour it. Scarcely have these good souls left the church, when the cares and troubles of this life overpower them and, alas, all the solemn truths they have heard, all the good resolutions they have made are forgotten, and the impression which God's grace made in their hearts is effaced. They remain the same lukewarm Christians, the same irreclaimable sinners. St. James justly compares them to a man who beholds his own countenance in a mirror, goes away "and presently forgets what manner of man he was." Jas. 1, 23. Pope St. Gregory truly remarks concerning this class of hearers "they openly carry the most precious treasure which they should keep hidden, and hence the robbers come and deprive them of it."

These, my dear Christians, are a few reasons why the word of God does not bring forth fruit, but only grave responsibility. With some it is the want of a good intention and earnest desire, with others it is lack of proper attention and due respect to the word of God, or they do not apply the truth to

themselves, but to others. The greater number, however, permit the cares of this life to stifle, and the devil to steal the good resolutions from their hearts. Oh, for what a great abuse of graces will they not be held accountable! What is capable of opening the eyes of these unfortunate sinners, who will save them from eternal ruin, since the word of God is ineffectual. Hence let us listen to His holy teaching in such a manner that it will really become a nourishment of eternal life for our soul. Let us listen with the greatest attention, devotion and earnest desire for our salvation, but, above all, let us preserve the fruits, the divine inspirations, in a faithful heart and carry out the good resolutions. Our divine Saviour calls only those blessed "who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it and bring forth fruit in patience." Luke 8, 15. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA.

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.

"Lord that I may see."
Luke 18, 37.

THERE are innumerable persons, my dear brethren, who can justly be compared with the blind man of to-day's gospel. They are in possession of good corporal eye-sight, but their souls have no eyes to see and to understand what is beneficial for them. Who are these spiritually blind? They are all those unfortunate sinners who, having separated themselves from God, walk in the darkness of their impenitence, on the broad road to perdition. In the Old Testament, the prophet Sophonias speaks of these impenitents, saying: "They shall walk as blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord." Soph. 1, 17. Truly, brethren, it is a blindness without parallel when a worm of the earth dares to continue in enmity with the Creator, who at any moment can command the angel of death to strike with the scythe, and behold, the daring

sinner will lie buried in hell! Is it not a blindness apt to move us to tears, if we are daily performing good works which would insure the greatest heavenly reward, and yet we must say to ourselves: It is all in vain, we are separated from God, and hence no reward awaits us hereafter. Is it not a blindness indescribably sad when God daily offers His mercy, pardon and reconciliation, and you deliberately close your eyes to every ray of heavenly grace, and stubbornly refuse to take the saving hand of God which is held out to you? Ah! must we not fear that the command of God through the prophet Isaias be accomplished in you. "Blind the heart of this people, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them." Isaias 6, 10.

The philosopher Seneca relates of a servant girl who suddenly lost her eyesight from the effect of a flash of lightning. The poor girl would not believe that she was blind, but imagined that it had suddenly grown dark: as the darkness did not disappear, she always

kept a lamp burning and continued to do her work. One day, however, she unfortunately fell down a stairway and broke her neck. There are, my dear brethren, many Christians in a similar condition. Although their souls are totally blind, they will not believe it. On the contrary, they consider themselves as the only ones who are wise and can see, hence they look down with smiling contempt on those who indulge in serious thoughts of penance, rather than drink the cup of pleasure which the world offers to its votaries. Shouting in wild revelry, they dance along in mirthful company the broad and flower-strewn road, against which our Lord warned us, until the dread hand of death grasps them and hurls them into the eternal fire of hell. This misfortune, having happened, it can never be repaired. Now their tears flow like rivers of fire but never will they be able to purify the soul and cleanse it from the sins for which they must suffer eternally.

The Roman Emperor Adrian had a servant who from his youth had lost the sight of one eye. When the poor young man accidentally

lost the other eye, the emperor, moved with compassion, promised to grant any petition that he asked. The blind youth remained silent, but being importuned by the emperor, he a last said, my lord restore my eyesight. My dear Christians, this petition was in vain, for God alone can restore the sight that has been totally destroyed. But you, spiritually blind, will it also be in vain for you to cry out, Oh! that I may see! Oh! no, if you really and earnestly desire to have your spiritual sight restored, I shall direct you to a physician who will most willingly help you. It is the same who, as is related in the gospel of to-day, restored the sight of the blind man on his way to Jericho. It is the same who in Jerusalem spoke to the man born blind: "Go wash in the pool of Siloe" who "went and washed and came seeing." John 9, 7. To you also, my dear Christians, our Lord directs this admonition: "Go and wash." But where? In the life-giving waters of the sacrament of penance. Yes, go confess your sins, be sorry for them, atone for them by penance, and as true as God reigns in Heaven, the

priestly absolution will cure you of the blindness with which the devil and sin have afflicted you.

If, however, your sight has been restored, beware of again becoming blind. Do not look back with a longing desire to the world and its illusive pleasures, but steadfastly keep your eyes on Jesus, your Divine Model, on Mary your blessed mother, on Heaven your eternal home. Then certainly you will retain the glorious sight of your soul during your whole life, and for this be recompensed by seeing the triune God in Heaven above, face to face, amidst the glory of His saints, in an ocean of bliss and eternal happiness. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

OUR WARFARE AGAINST THE INFERNAL TEMPTER.

"Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil."
Matt. 4, 1.

IN the gospel of to-day, my dear brethren, we see that the prince of darkness dares

to tempt even the very Purity and Sanctity, namely the Son of God. Hence we need not be surprised nor can we complain if we poor sinners are tempted by the devil, who "as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." I Peter 5, 8. No, we should neither be amazed nor disheartened, "But resist him strong in faith." I Peter 5, 9. We should also remember the consoling words of St. James, "Resist the devil and he will fly from you." James 4, 7. We shall certainly be victorious in all temptations and all the assaults of the infernal serpent, if we heed the solemn admonition of our Lord, "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation." Matt. 26, 41. For, says a pious divine, "where vigilance protects and prayer assists, the devil has lost his power.

Watchfulness is, indeed, the first and most necessary means to gain victory. How do we act to protect ourselves against thieves? Do we not carefully lock the doors and bolt the windows? Now, we must act in a similar manner regarding the doors and windows of our souls which are our external senses.

These we must watch and guard carefully, so that the devil may not enter into our hearts, by our imprudently gazing on immodest objects or by listening to wicked conversations, and thus kindling the slumbering fire of passions.

You must not be satisfied merely with guarding your senses, but you must observe the greatest vigilance against Satan's allies, the scandal-giver, the seducer who come to you in clothing of sheep, but inwardly are ravenous wolves, who by impure language, wicked examples, alluring conversations and promises, attempt to make you partners of their crimes. You carefully avoid a person or a house where you know there is a contagious disease, but I say to you: be still more careful in avoiding wicked persons, for they kill not the body, but the soul which is infinitely more valuable; they do not destroy your temporal happiness, but they will bring you into eternal perdition. Be ye therefore warned by Moses, that holy servant of God, who spoke not only to the Jewish people, but whose inspired words are also directed to you: "Depart from the

tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be involved in their sins." Numb. 16, 26. Yes, depart from the wicked, touch neither their books nor their works, do not join in their amusements and entertainments for, "He that toucheth pitch, shall be defiled with it and he that hath fellowship with the proud shall put on pride." Eccli. 13, 1.

We must, moreover, guard our heart, lest the devil enter it by means of our innate sensuality. Whenever temptation rises in the heart, the devil stands before it, knocks and seeks admission. Do not act like our mother Eve in the garden of Paradise, who attempted to argue with Satan, and hence was conquered. As soon as the tempter's voice is heard, say to him "Begone, Satan." If a spark of fire fall on your clothing, how do you act? You quench it or shake it off instantly, lest it should burn your garment. Now, with the same quickness and determination, you must shake off or quench the first spark of concupiscence as soon as it rises in your heart, lest the beautiful garment of innocence be injured or destroyed.

St. Thomas a Kempis admonishes us in the "Following of Christ" that we should be watchful, especially in the beginning of temptation, for then the enemy is more easily overcome, that we will be victorious in the combat if we do not suffer him to enter the door of the mind, but refuse him entrance the moment he knocks.

Alas! our weakness and infirmity are so great, that even with the most careful vigilance, we cannot escape all temptations of the devil. No one knew this so well as our Divine Saviour, hence He tells us in the gospel, not only to watch, but also to pray. Prayer is the weapon with which we must fight and gain the victory. "Our prayer" says St. Augustine, "ascends to Heaven, and God's mercy descends to us." The cause of all the sins which we have committed must be attributed to the want of vigilance in prayer, for had we prayed earnestly and fervently in time of temptation, the devil would never have conquered. Hence my dear brethren, taught by sad experience, let us carefully heed the admonition of our dear Lord, and not only watch,

but also pray that we may not be led into temptation. Let us, in our morning and evening devotions, pray to God for the grace to resist all the assaults of the devil, and let us also, at the first moment of every temptation, raise our mind to God and take refuge in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Let us always walk in the presence of God, be mindful of death and eternity, for Holy Scripture teaches, "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." Eccles. 7, 40. But above all, let us by the frequent reception of the sacraments, renew and strengthen the life of grace in our souls, and obtain from our Divine Saviour that power which will make us strong and invincible against all attacks of the devil. Then, united with our Lord in divine love, we shall, like St. Paul fight a good fight, finish our course, and keep the faith, and at our last end, receive as a reward, an immortal crown, the crown of justice, which the just Judge will render to us on that day. Tim. 4, 7. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

LONG, AND LABOR FOR HEAVEN.

"Lord, it is good for us to be here . . .
let us make here three tabernacles."
Matt. 17, 5.

SO great was the joy felt by the apostles on seeing their divine Master in His glory, that they had no other desire than to build habitations on Mount Thabor, and there dwell forever with Jesus. This, however, was a futile desire, for shortly afterwards they were compelled to descend from the mountain, where they had seen so much glory and experienced so great a happiness, and were necessitated to continue on the thorn-strewn path of life. They were again obliged to engage in the hard battle of life, and after many years of trials and persecutions, they were to end their sufferings by the death of martyrdom.

There are thousands of Christians who act similarly to the apostles. They permit their hearts to be chained to the trifling and worthless pleasures of this world, and expect

to find that happiness which can be found only in Heaven. They do not consider the words of the royal prophet, "Man is like vanity, his days pass away like a shadow." Ps. 143, 4. They will not understand that all earthly happiness is vain and fleeting; that it is like a delightful dream, which is soon followed by an awakening to a sad reality; that it is like a bubble, one moment reflecting the beautiful colors of the rainbow, and another, bursting and vanishing into nothing. Is the healthiest and strongest man secure against sickness? Cannot the greatest wealth dwindle into nothing? Are not the highest honors frequently followed by disgrace? Does not daily experience show us that delightful pleasures are often succeeded by the greatest sorrow? Nothing is stable under the sun, nothing is certain but death alone, which puts an end to all earthly things, and brings the soul before the judgment-seat of God. Oh! folly and madness to attempt building tabernacles of happiness on this earth, and to forget the one, and most necessary duty, the salvation of the soul.

How earnestly does not our Lord warn us against such indifference! How solemnly does He not admonish us in the gospel, when He says: "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal", but "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and His justice: and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. 6, 19 and 33. How unremittingly does not our Lord warn us to be prepared, for the Son of Man will come like a thief in the night, when He is least expected. Hence, let us not say with St. Peter, "It is good for us to be here, let us here make our tabernacles." What we build on earth has no stable foundation. A whirlwind arises, and behold, in a moment the edifice of happiness which we erected, and which we considered so strong, so indestructible, lies in a heap of ruins, nothing remains but the memory of our former bliss, and the deep sorrow over the vanished happiness. "Here we have no lasting home, but we must seek one that is to come." Yes, that home above the clouds we should seek, for that we

should strive, that true eternal home, where every tear of sorrow is dried and every moan of grief has an end, where, in the midst of the heavenly choirs we shall see the glory of God and partake of the happiness, "which neither eye hath seen nor ear heard, nor which hath entered into the heart of man." "Hearing the words of divine inspiration" says Pope St. Gregory, "your hearts should be inflamed with an ardent desire to be in possession of that home where you hope to find eternal happiness."

It is not sufficient, my dear brethren, merely to long and desire for Heaven, you must labor, battle, make the sacrifices which God demands, for, "the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away." Matt. 11, 12, and St. Paul tells us that he who has fought the good fight will be crowned. This important truth our Lord wished to inculcate in the minds of His disciples when He did not immediately lead them from Caesarea Phillipi to Mount Thabor, but only after a laborious journey of six days. During a whole week, they had to undergo fatigue, suffer the heat and

other inconveniences of the journey before they were permitted to obtain a glimpse of the glorified body of our Lord, a shadow of the glories of Heaven. In a similar manner, we too, must, during the week of our earthly career traverse the thorny path of life, until, at last, on the seventh day, on the eternal Sabbath, we shall see what God has prepared for those that love Him.

Hence our longing for an eternal crown will be in vain, our desires for the beautiful celestial home will be useless, if we allow our heart to rest idly, and presumptuously think, God is merciful and will reserve a place for us in His mansions. No, we must strive, labor, battle. We must overcome our bad habits, root out our vices, and carefully avoid all dangerous and proximate occasions of sin. We must, prompted by the love of God, faithfully perform the duties of our state of life, bear their ills patiently, pardon all offenses, and forgive our enemies from the bottom of our hearts, in a word, we must follow in the footsteps of our Lord, deny ourselves daily, take up our cross and follow Him. Thus the saints

have acted, and thus they lived, and now they look down upon this valley of tears from their heavenly abode, and encouragingly say to us, it is good for us to be here, our recompense is great; our reward, glorious; our tears are dried; our sorrows are at an end; our labors are over, and all is eternal peace. Oh! imitate our example, fight the good fight; remain faithful to God; persevere unto the end, and you will ascend unto Sion, the city of the living God and the heavenly Jerusalem, to the company of thousands of angels and to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Testament." Heb. 12, 23. Thus the saints speak to us from the heavenly Mount Thabor, let us listen to their voice, my dear brethren, and follow their counsel. No sacrifice will be too great, no labor too difficult, no suffering too painful, where our eternal happiness is at stake. Bless, O Lord, our good resolutions, and through the intercession of the saints, grant us the grace to achieve what we have begun. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

CALUMNY.

"But some of them said: he casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils." Luke 11, 15.

EVEN the Son of God, my dear Christians, the infinite Sanctity, cannot escape the slanderous tongue of the vile calumniators, and they take a miracle, a divine act, as the occasion for heaping insults on our Lord. "By Beelzebub the prince of devils" said the Jews, "He casts out devils." Now, my dear brethren, should we not abhor, with our whole heart, a sin, which goes so far as to attack, even the honor of our divine Saviour? Should we not carefully guard ourselves against it? St. Bernard says, "He who slanders his neighbor has the devil on his tongue, and he who listens to the slander has the devil in his ear." An awful saying, yet perfectly true, for what does the slanderer? He accuses his brother of crimes that he has not committed. He calls him a thief, fully aware that it is false; he speaks of the scandalous conduct of his

brother, knowing it to be a lie; he accuses him of leading a bad life, and has no proofs for his assertions. Can malice invent more cruel deeds against his innocent brother? Consider, my dear brethren, if a diabolical tongue uttered these things against you, would it not cause you great sorrow and indignation? Would you not have difficulty to control yourself, so as not to lay hands on the culumniator? And you dare thus to grieve your brother! Can this be called fraternal charity? Is it not rather fiendish malice? This is not all, however, the slanderer adds the greatest injustice to the injury. Is there anything more precious than a man's reputation, or more irreparable when once lost? Without a good reputation he cannot perform his duties; transact his business, hence the common saying, honor lost, all lost. Truly the wise Solomon says, "A good name is better than great riches, and a good favor is above gold and silver." Prov. 22, 1. Nor is this all, the base slanderer robs his neighbor, not only of his good name and reputation, but often of his property, inflicting the severest injuries on

his fortune by malicious lying. Who will engage in any transaction with a man, whose character for honesty is questionable? And who will be held accountable for all these evil consequences? Who will have to answer for the loss of employment, the hunger that has been endured in consequence, the tears that have been shed by innocently suffering families? Who, but the vile calumniator, who has caused all this misery and woe.

The calumniator, however, has not yet exhausted his malice. Not only does he act contrary to God's first law of Christian charity, not only does he rob his neighbor of that precious boon, his good name, not only does he injure him in his temporal prosperity, but he destroys his peace and happiness. How many have not lost their health, how many have not grieved themselves to death at the loss of their good name! How often has not a slanderous tongue caused the greatest hatred, the most intense discord between husband and wife, between brothers and sisters, between neighbor and neighbor, who, formerly were united in love and fraternal charity. How

often does not this infernal seed, sown by the vile slanderer, cause a flood of the most poignant tears, of curses and blasphemies of bloody fights and quarrels and of never ending animosities. And who is the cause of all these sins and crimes? Whom will the eternal Judge hold accountable for all this woe and destruction? Whom else, but the vile wretch who, with the venomous fangs of his slanderous tongue, has blasted the heart of his innocent brother.

Behold, this is the malice of slander, which cries to Heaven for vengeance; this is calumny, with its fearful consequences. And yet, there are many who consider this detestable evil as naught, or at most, a slight fault, not worth mentioning. Ah! before the judgment-seat of God, vile calumniator, you will discover the heinousness of the sin. Hearken at once to this truth, and remember that you will be irreparably lost, that you will be cast into the pool of fire, unless you not only confess these crimes and be sorry for them, but also retract your slander, make reparation for all the injuries done, and restore, as far as possible, your neigh-

bor's good name and reputation. Be on your guard for the future, and do not injure your neighbor's character nor destroy his happiness. Always speak of others as you wish them to speak of you. Let your conversation be such that you will be justified before the eternal Judge, who will call you to an account for every idle word. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

TRUST IN GOD.

"Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" John 6, 5.

LIKE a loving Father, among His children, we see our divine Saviour standing amidst a multitude of hungry people, supplying their wants, even before they ask Him. In a similar manner, our Heavenly Father is daily in the midst of millions of His children, providing for their necessities and guiding them to their eternal happiness. There is no truth more clearly and frequently expressed in Holy Scripture, than that of an all-seeing, all-wise Providence. The

same truth is indelibly written in the book of nature, as well as in all the affairs of man. Notwithstanding all the evidences of this Divine Government, there is no truth more frequently denied, attacked and derided by wicked Christians. St. Paul exclaims in profound veneration, "Oh! the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God. How incomprehensible are His judgments and how unsearchable are His ways." Rom. 11, 33. And yet, many short-sighted Christians find herein only inconsistency and contradiction. No one ventures to criticise an artist's work, unless he is capable of doing so, yet, every narrow-minded person considers himself justified in criticising the ways of God's inscrutable providence. How often are not people heard to say, how can there be an all-wise Providence when we see so much confusion and disparity in life! Here luxury, there indigence, here fraud clothed in costly garments, there honesty clad in tatters, here the wicked revelling in wild carousals, there the innocent weeping and wailing! Where are the justice and wisdom of Providence?

My dear Christians, let St. Augustine answer you. You ask God, he says, where is Thy justice, and He asks you, where is your faith. Has your Saviour, in the gospel, promised His disciples temporal happiness and prosperity? On the contrary, every page speaks of crosses, sufferings and persecutions. Nowhere will you find the promise of unalloyed and undisturbed happiness. You behold Joseph in the hands of his cruel brothers and you pity him; you find the innocent youth in the dungeon, and you complain about injustice. When later, however, you see him on the throne, the savior of his family and of all Egypt, when you see that his sufferings and persecutions were only stepping-stones to his present power and glory, what do you answer? If we do not always witness so happy a termination of events, if we do not find, in every case, the cockle and wheat growing together, that virtue receives its reward, and vice its punishment in this world, bear in mind the words of Holy Scripture. "God shall judge both the just and the wicked, and then shall be the time of everything." Eccles. 3, 17.

Pope St. Gregory, speaking on the same subject says, "It is true that there are many things obscure and mysterious in the government of the world, but all things are arranged for our good, to humble our pride and to direct our thoughts to Heaven."

Now, my dear Christians, if you had no other motives, but you have many, for your faith in divine Providence, one alone would be sufficient, and that is, the Lord's Prayer, which He Himself has taught. In it, He permits you to address Him daily by the sweet and endearing name of Father, a Father infinitely good and kind, from whom you certainly have nothing to fear, but every good to expect. Hence, in all trials, you can confidently say with the psalmist, "Thou, O Lord, art my strength and my refuge, and for thy name's-sake thou wilt lead me and nourish me." Psalm 30, 4. Though we may not be exempt from pain and suffering, let us remember that they come from Heaven, and if borne with the proper spirit, will lead us to Heaven. Faith teaches that they are not evils, on the contrary, they are an evidence of God's love

for us, "For, whom the Lord loveth," says St. Paul "he chastiseth, and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Heb. 12, 6. Therefore, as loving disciples of Christ, should we not willingly ascend Mount Calvary with Him, and drink with Him from the chalice of bitterness, and take from His shoulders a portion of the holy cross?

My dear brethren, in all the difficulties and vicissitudes of life, hearken to the admonition of St. Peter, "Be you humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in the time of visitation, casting all your care upon him for he has care for you." I. Peter 5, 6–7. Yes, truly, He has care for us. Why, then, need we be so anxious and full of fear? If we faithfully do our part, the Lord will certainly do the rest. If we honor our heavenly Father by a child-like confidence, His grace and assistance will always be ours. Let us, in all adverse circumstances, humble ourselves under His mighty hand, and after this life of trial and sufferings, a glorious crown will await us in the blissful realms above. Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY.

SACRILEGIOUS COMMUNION.

"They took up stones therefore to cast at Him." John 8, 59.

HORRIBLE, indeed, is the malice of the ungrateful Jews narrated in this day's gospel! They take up stones to cast at Jesus, their greatest benefactor, the annointed of the Lord. They attempt to lay hands on the infinite Sanctity! Jesus, however, frustrates their designs, by withdrawing from their view and going out of the temple. This attempt of the Jews was certainly as great a sin as diabolical malice could suggest, but there is a greater crime, which cries louder to Heaven for vengeance, and which is sometimes committed by Christians. And this crime is not merly attempted, but it is put into execution. It consists in a sacrilegious Communion, receiving our Lord Jesus Christ really and truly present under the form of bread in the consecrated host, into a heart of Judas, which is defiled with mortal sin, and in which the prince of darkness is enthroned.

Oh! most heinous sin, Oh! most wicked of all sacrileges! How solemnly does not St. Paul warn us against so terrible a crime! "Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily: shall be guilty of the Body and of the Blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself: not discerning the Body of the Lord." I. Cor. 27, 30.

Who are those who commit this sacrilege? They are, according to the teachings of faith, all those, who, knowing that they are in the state of mortal sin, in enmity with God, receive the Lord, without being cleansed in the sacrament of penance. They are, moreover, those who go to the tribunal of penance, but who make a bad confession. These latter are still more culpable, for the former commit but one sacrilege, the latter two, a sacrilegious confession and a sacrilegious Communion.

The great question is, my dear Christians, do all those who approach the tribunal of

penance before going to the table of the Lord, make a good confession, a confession which reconciles them with God? Do all examine their conscience with that carefulness which so important an action requires? Do they accuse themselves to God's representative with that sincerety required by the omniscient God? What can be thought of their contrition? Do they merely grieve in word for their sins, or do they sincerely detest them with all their heart? Are they sorry for, at least, all their mortal sins, without excusing or remaining attached to them? Is their contrition prompted by proper motives? If they are sorry only on account of having incurred temporal loss, this will avail them nothing. Are they truly sorry because they have offended God, lost His grace and deserved hell? Have they made a firm purpose of amendment, to avoid, not only every mortal sin, but all proximate occasions of sin? Are they determined to make use of the means necessary for leading a better life, and earnestly resolved to make the required restitution and reparation?

Ah! my dear Christians, I greatly fear that all confessions have not these necessary qualities. It is rather my conviction, that indifference and carelessness in examining their conscience, or the concealment of sins through false shame or fear, make their confessions worthless and their holy Communions sacrilegious. I am convinced that the sacrament of penance, and hence also the Holy Eucharist, are, for many, sacraments of malediction and condemnation for want of contrition and firm purpose of amendment. Or, can we call that a good confession, if to-day one confesses having frequently missed Mass during the year, and the following Sunday, he again neglects Mass without sufficient reason? Is it an indication of having received God's graces, if, in the morning, the king of angels rests on his tongue, and in the evening, that same tongue utters impure, scandalous language, which seduces and destroys innocent souls? Can it be an occasion of joy for the angels in Heaven, if the dishonest man, having confessed his injustice of twenty years, still retains the ill-gotten goods? Or, if the

drunkard, who from youth, has been promising to reform, and is the same inebriate to-day? Ah, no! Let us not deceive ourselves. Such confessions, without contrition or purpose of amendment, are mockery and self-deception. They cannot bring joy to God and His holy angels, they please the devil only, they can bring no grace, no blessing, naught but judgment and eternal damnation.

Hence, my dear brethren, prior to our approaching the tribunal of penance, let us, by sincere contrition, rend asunder the old garment of sin. Let us approach, not as liars and hypocrites, but as true penitents, so that our defiled souls may be purified. He only can partake worthily of the Bread of angels, who is clad in the wedding garment of sanctifying grace and holy purity, who is a child of God and an heir of Heaven. Amen.

PALM SUNDAY.

REMEMBRANCE OF THE PASSION.

"He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross." Philip 2, 8.

THIS day, brethren, commences the celebration of holy week, that week during which our holy mother Church leads her children to Mt. Calvary, to witness the death-scene of her Divine Spouse, our Blessed Redeemer. She speaks to us in the words of our Lord, "Let us go up to Jerusalem and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man. For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon: And after they have scourged him, they will put him to death," Luke 18, 31—33. This ever memorable passion, by which we have been reconciled with God and Heaven, through which we have received all graces and blessings, this passion will be brought before us to contemplate. We shall see our Lord in Gethsemani prostrate on the ground in the

agony of death, His sacred blood, like drops of sweat, run to the ground. We shall see His sacred body lacerated by scourges, His head pierced with thorns, and, loaded with the heavy weight of the cross, He staggers along, falling three times to the ground under the oppressive burden. We shall see Him on Mt. Calvary, nailed to the cross, hanging between Heaven and earth, encompassed by an ocean of grief, forlorn and abandoned in His agony and death, shedding the last drop of His blood for sinners. How far must we not have advanced in impenitence and hardness of heart, if such a panorama of sufferings leaves us cold and compassionless! Could we consider ourselves aught but monsters of iniquity, were we to witness the death-scene of our Redeemer without emotion, without compunction, without love, without sorrow for our sins, — yes, more hardened than the stones of Calvary that were split at His death! Our souls would be darker even than the heavens, which, in mid-day were obscured and out of grief, covered themselves with the mantle of night. We would be less feeling than the inanimate

earth, which trembled and quaked in fear and dismay. Would not our hardness of heart and want of compassion deserve the condemnation expressed in the words of St. Paul? "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema." I Cor. 16, 22.

At one time, two zealous Fathers gave a mission at a certain place. The congregation was steeped in indifference and vice. All efforts to move the poor deluded sinners, to make them realize their terrible condition and to return to a better life were in vain. At the conclusion of the mission one of the Fathers ascended the pulpit, and, making a last effort, preached with all the powers of his soul, as only the love of God and of his fellow-men could inspire him. But behold! he stops suddenly, has a hemorrhage and falls back a corpse. The other missionary took his place, and pointing to the blood-stained garment of his fellow-priest, exclaims, "See the blood which my brother has shed for love for you! Will you deliver to Satan your immortal souls, for whose sake he has given up his life?" The scene and the heart-rending words of the missionary moved

the terrified congregation. They sank on their knees, shed tears of contrition, and, from hardened sinners were changed to sincere penitents.

My dear brethren, if the blood of a pious and zealous priest could produce so remarkable a conversion, what miracles of grace should not be wrought by the blood of a suffering and dying God! Should it not fill our eyes with tears of love and our hearts with sorrow for our great and manifold sins? Should it not awaken us from our lethargy of indifference and arouse us to a life of penance, virtue and Christian perfection? Oh! that the blood of Jesus, flowing from His five wounds would effect this change. Let us, during this holy time, hasten in spirit to Mt. Calvary, and at the foot of the cross, at the death-scene of our Saviour, meditate on His sufferings, and inflame our cold heart with the fire of divine love. Let us, with deep contrition and full confidence in God's infinite goodness and mercy, lay the heavy burden of our sins at the feet of Jesus. Let us arouse in ourselves an earnest desire to live henceforth only for Jesus, to

delight in showing Him our love, to make satisfaction for our sins, and thus prepare for that last hour, which will decide our doom for all eternity. Oh! truly, if we form such resolutions at the foot of the cross of our dying Saviour, and if, with God's grace, we put them into practice, we shall, at the hour of death, hear the consoling words which our Lord spoke to the penitent thief "Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Luke 23, 43. Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY.

OUR SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION.

"Behold the place, where they laid Him." Mark 16, 6.

"THIS is the day, which the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice therein." Ps. 117, 24. for "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction." Apoc. 5, 12.

With these triumphal words spoken by Almighty God in the Sacred Scripture, our

holy mother Church rejoices, and exults in the victory of her Divine Spouse, and she invites all her children to join her in giving thanks and praises to God. In the divine service, she introduces us, as it were, into our heavenly and eternal fatherland, by putting aside her usual hymns of praise, and, in their stead, intones the joyful Alleluia, which the blessed inhabitants of the eternal Jerusalem sing before the Majesty of God. The Church intends thus to awaken in us a longing desire for our heavenly home; she wishes to teach us, even now, this glorious hymn, that we may be able to join in the celestial choirs.

What a beautiful, sublime and elevating idea! Will this holy desire of mother Church be fulfilled in all? Will it be fulfilled in those who know nothing, and desire to know nothing of their own spiritual resurrection from the grave of their sins; in those with whom it is still Good Friday, who by their life of sin, still cry out: "Crucify Him?" Ah, no, if we remain buried in sin, the resurrection of our Lord will avail us nothing: if our seared conscience still groans under the burden of crime, the joyful Alleluia, the

glorious hymns can have naught in common with us. If we would profit by Christ's resurrection, we must ascend from the tomb of iniquity and be among the risen: We must separate from those who are still spiritually buried. When the question arises among the hardened sinners, among the careless and indifferent, among the angry and envious, among the liars and unjust, among the scandal-givers and the impure, concerning our whereabouts the answer must be, "He is risen, he is not here," behold the place where he has lain, he is here no longer.

Our resurrection, however, must be an actual, a real rising from the grave of sin. Saul believed he saw the prophet Samuel recalled to life, it was, however, only an apparition. Thus we find many Christians, who, on the day of Easter, imagine that they are really risen from the sepulchre of unrighteousness, but alas! their resurrection is only apparent. It is not a reality, but only a shadow, a deception. Can we call it a resurrection, when the Christian at his Easter confession arises from the grave of

sin, and as it were, looks around for a short time, and then returns to it? Do you call it a change of heart, if to-day you weep over your sins and to-morrow you commit them anew; if to-day you declare that you would die rather than offend God, and to-morrow or at the next occasion, you break your promise? Here you find a slave of impurity, dragging the chains of evil habits from his youth; he goes to confession, only to mock God with his promises; there, you find the drunkard daily making protestations and good resolutions to avoid his evil associates, without, however, making an effort to keep his word. Again, you find the unjust man in possession of ill-gotten gains for years, without endeavoring to relinquish them and to make restitution. Think you, is this the repentance which the Almighty God asks through the mouth of the prophet, "Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unjust man his thoughts?" Isaias 55, 7. Is this to heed the admonition of the prophet Joel, "Now therefore saith the Lord: Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping, and in mourning. And

rend your hearts and not your garments." Joel 2, 12—13. My dear Christians, do not deceive yourselves. If you do not break the chains of your evil habits, if you do not give up your evil associations, if you do not abhor bad books and proximate occasions of sin, if you do not give up your enmities, if you are not willing to restore ill-gotten gains, unwilling to make reparation for injuries done to your neighbor's good name and reputation, then do not even think of spiritual resurrection; on the contrary, be assured that your Easter duties will condemn you to a more terrible death for profaning God's holiest gifts.

It behooves us, therefore, my dear brethren, to offer to God the sacrifice of sincere repentance and true conversion, for the words of Holy Scripture, "Christ rising from the dead, dieth now no more" Rom. 6, 9 should also be said of us. Nevermore should we be enslaved by the bonds of sin, the tyranny of Satan. Nevermore should we return to the grave of iniquity, but to the last moment of our life we should keep the promises made to our Lord. This is what

St. Paul means, when he says "Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God." Colos. 3, 1. Henceforth, we should lift up our heart to God, and seek in all things only the fulfillment of his holy will, His greater honor and glory. We are pilgrims and sojourners, who have here no permanent habitation, but we seek for one above.

If these are our dispositions, then we can partake of the Easter joys, then only can we understand the raptures of the Church; then only shall we be worthy to unite in the joyful strains of this glorious celebration; then only shall we be worthy to join the celestial choirs, and for all eternity, sing the everlasting Alleluia before the throne of God. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

MEANS OF PRESERVING THE PEACE OF GOD.

"Peace be to you." John 20, 19.

PEACE! Oh! sweet and consoling word! To be in peace with God, with the world, with yourself, is this not to possess

Heaven on earth? This priceless gift, which surpasses our understanding, was brought by our divine Saviour from Heaven to this valley of tears. On this account, the prophet Isaias called Him, "the Prince of peace." Hence the angels sang at His nativity, "Peace to men of good will." Luke 2, 14. The last words spoken to His apostles, before beginning His passion were, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." John 14, 27. His first greeting after His resurrection was, "Pax vobis" peace be to you.

This consoling pax was not given to the apostles alone, but it will certainly be fulfilled in us, if we have, during the joyous Easter time, celebrated a true and lasting resurrection, for in this qualification most are wanting. Having for a short time, left the tomb of iniquity, they return to it. Having severed all connection with Satan, they become reconciled to him, by falling into mortal sin, and again enthrone him in their hearts. What is the cause, brethren, of this strange perversity? The reason is, they do not avoid the dangerous and proxi-

mate occasions of sin, and they do not make use of the means so necessary for a true amendment.

He who is anxious to preserve his life will not carelessly expose it to the greatest danger, and he who is solicitous about his soul's welfare, about remaining in a state of grace, must be equally careful not to expose it to such dangers as will inevitably lead it to destruction. Truly, it should not be necessary for God to warn us in the words of Holy Scripture, "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it." Eccli. 3, 27 . . . or with David, "With the perverse thou wilt be perverted." Ps. 17, 27. Sad experience daily demonstrates, that all good resolutions will be broken as soon as you carelessly expose yourself to danger. It is useless for the drunkard to vow with tears, nevermore to yield to the temptation of drinking. As soon as he visits his old haunts and mingles with his former companions, he will yield to his vile passion. It is vain for the calumniator to declare that he would rather tear out his tongue than slander his neighbor. He will keep his word only so long as he avoids

those vile gossipers, who invariably try to destroy their neighbor's honor and reputation. He will be caught in the vilifying flow of slander, and will be carried along with it. It is vain for the poor wretch, given to impurity, to declare that he would rather die than throw again the pearl of virtues into the mire. He will remain steadfast, only so long as he avoids those evil associations and connections, where his soul formerly found death and destruction. So sure as he returns, he will meet with the same fate, as does straw, when it is ignited; as the straw will be consumed by the fire, so will the return to his evil associations cause the death of his soul. The catechism teaches you that every confession made without a firm purpose of amendment is invalid, and this firm purpose is wanting, if you are not determined to avoid the proximate occasions of mortal sin.

This applies also to those who are not resolved to make use of the requisite means for amendment. It is useless for the patient to hope for recovery, unless he takes the remedies prescribed by the physician. In a

similar manner, it is useless for the spiritual patient to expect a recovery to the life of grace, unless he makes use of the means or remedies which the confessor, the physician of his soul, prescribes. These means are, above all, prayer, the remembrance of the presence of God, the thought of death, and the frequent reception of the sacraments. Yes, prayer, earnest and persevering prayer is necessary for the life of grace and peace with God. Especially in times of temptation we must instantly raise our mind to God and, crying for divine aid, have recourse to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. The remembrance of the presence of God and the recollection of the eternal truths are powerful aids to protect us in times of temptation. Hence we should frequently say to ourselves, this may be my last day. I may appear to-day before God, my Judge. The sacraments should be the most indispensible requisites for our souls, hence we should receive, as often as possible, and with the greatest devotion and burning desire the source of all graces, Jesus in the holy Communion. We shall thus obtain that heavenly

power and strength which will make us invincible against our spiritual enemies. For our Lord has promised: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I him," 'and hath everlasting life.' John 6, 57. How many good Christians have not experienced the truth of this consoling promise!

My dear Christians, you now know how precious is the peace of God, and how carefully it must be guarded. You have also learned the means of attaining it. Avoid all proximate occasions of sin; be fervent in prayer, frequently receive the sacraments; walk always in the presence of God and remember death, judgment and eternity. By doing this, you will certainly remain in union with the divine Prince of peace. In this union of peace and love, and in the knowledge of possessing a clear conscience you will even now, have a foretaste of the future, celestial peace. In the hour of death you will with joyful confidence approach the judgment-seat of Him, who through His apostle has said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." Apoc. 2, 10. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

OBSERVANCE OF THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

"Mine know me." John 10, 14.

IF Jesus is the good Shepherd, then we, whom He has redeemed, should be docile sheep, for only to such will the door of the heavenly fold be opened. On that great day of the general Judgment, only those will be placed on the right side, who have, during life, faithfully listened to the voice of the good Shepherd. This call we receive directly in our hearts by the voice of grace, indirectly, through the voice of Christ's holy Church, which is His bride and representative on earth. The voice of the Church is the voice of God, and the commandments of the Church are the commandments of God, for Christ conferred on the holy Church the pastorate which He Himself exercised whilst on earth.

But alas! how often does it not happen that the good Shepherd speaks through His holy Church, and His sheep do not listen!

The good Shepherd, through His vicegerant, has given us the commandments of the Church under pain of sin, — yes under the pain of eternal damnation, and yet there are thousands who call themselves children of the Catholic Church, and yet refuse obedience to their holy Mother. They trample upon her commandments with the greatest scorn and derision.

Now, let me ask what is contained in these commandments which are treated so contemptously! They are, in substance, naught but a more distinct definition and clear explanation of the commandments of God. It is undoubtedly a divine injunction to assist at the holy sacrifice of the mass with attention and devotion. Now, in the first commandment, the Church merely designates at what time the commandment is to be fulfilled, namely on Sundays and holy days of obligation. An important requisite of a good Christian life is abnegation and self denial. As our Lord has left us no definite instruction on this point, the Church, in the second commandment, tells us the manner in which we are to comply with this

obligation. Our Lord, when instituting the sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist made it our bounden duty to receive them. He, himself, however, did not specify the time and frequency of their reception, leaving this to His Spouse, the Church, hence the third and the fourth commandments declare that we must approach them, at least, once a year. St. Paul teaches, "So also the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel." I Cor. 9, 14. The Church asks naught in the fifth commandment but this, that the ordinance of our Lord be fulfilled. St. Paul calls matrimony a great sacrament "but, I speak in Christ and in the Church." Eph. 5, 32. Now, in the sixth commandment, our holy mother, the Church, merely places a safeguard around this sacrament that it be received in a manner, truly to represent Christ's union with the Church. Thus, my beloved brethren, you perceive that the commandments of the Church are in substance, God's commandments, and the only difference existing is, that the Church has given us clearer exposition of their fulfilment.

No one can deny that the Church has the authority of making these precepts or regulations and defining them as commandments, for a denial of this, would be to separate himself from Christ and the holy gospel. For did not our Lord say to Peter, and in him, to all his successors, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth it shall be bound also in Heaven." Matt. 16, 19. That is those commandments which you ordain on earth will be ratified in Heaven. And Christ continues to address the apostles and their successors, "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me." Luke 10, 16. How then can you refuse obedience to the Church without opposing Christ? You are also aware that our Divine Lord said, "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." Matt. 18, 17. Are these words not still in force before the eternal Judge? And if so, how are these rebels to be designated? As Catholics? No, but as heathens and publicans. It is not I, who have given them this name, the Lord Himself has done so. The word, publican, in

the language of Holy Scripture, signifies a public sinner. Now, as there is no Heaven, but only a hell for these public sinners, then woe to them, for the anger of God will hurl them into eternal torments, unless, by their conversion and penance, they appease the divine wrath. For no one, says St. Cyprian, can have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother.

O you who hope in God and expect a happy eternity, remember that the commandments of the Church are God's commandments, and that you cannot disobey her without separating yourself from Jesus, and thus go to eternal perdition! Be, therefore, docile children, yielding ready obedience to the voice of your holy Mother. Reverently and lovingly submit to her commandments and perform them faithfully, that in the hour of your death, the good Shepherd who will judge you, may recognize you as His own and receive you into the eternal sheepfold, the glorious kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

LABOR FOR TIME AND FOR ETERNITY.

"What is this that He says, 'A little while?' we know not what He speaketh." John 16, 18.

IN the gospel of this Sunday, our Divine Saviour announces to His disciples His approaching departure from this world, at the same time consoling them with the promise of a speedy reunion in Heaven. He calls the number of years intervening between His departure and their death, 'a little while?' This the apostles could not comprehend, hence they asked in amazement, "What is this that He saith, A little while? we know not what He speaketh." John 16, 18. My beloved brethren, there are many Christians at the present time, who are as slow of comprehension as were the apostles. In fact, the majority do not wish to comprehend that, according to the words of our Lord, this earthly pilgrimage is only a little while, a fleeting moment, when compared with eternity. Their hearts

are so deeply absorbed in temporal affairs that they no longer seem to understand the solemn words of our Divine Saviour," "For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul." Matt. 16, 26.

The patriarch Jacob served his uncle Laban for fourteen years to obtain his daughter Rachel, and, although occupied all day in the most arduous labors, these years seemed but a few days, "because of the greatness of his love." Gen. 29, 20. My dear brethren, do we not also find innumerable Christians who, "because of the greatness of their love" for temporal goods; the one for mammon, the other for honor, a third for pleasure, cheerfully serve, for years, and consider the labor as nothing? What privations will not the miser undergo to fill his coffers with gold! From early morning till late at night, he labors assiduously, often suffering the pangs of hunger and cold. But what is the result? He is frequently an object of laughter for the devil and the ungrateful heirs of his riches. Take the ambitious man, how he toils and labors in the painful endeavor

of obtaining the pinnacle of honors! What difficulties does he not undergo, what humiliations does he not endure, what cringing and fawning, what a sacrifice of time and money! All this he does cheerfully, and what follows? He learns after death, that the remains of a king do not differ from those of a beggar. Again, what will not the drunkard do to satisfy the cravings of his vice! Day and night he remains in the dram-shop, undermining his constitution, flinging away his fortune, heedless of the contempt of the world, heedless of the tears of his wife, of the hunger of his children, he loses his mind and degrades himself to the level of the beast, and sinks into an early grave. Ask these idolators of shameful vice if they find difficult and laborious the efforts which bring them misfortune for time and eternity. In one voice they will answer, oh! no, we do this cheerfully, ah! that it lasts only so short a time!

See, my dear Christians, where there is a question of serving the world and sending the soul to hell, there is no thought of toil and hardship. How different when there is

question of serving God and of obtaining Heaven! Then, for many, the slightest privation is too irksome, the lightest work too burdensome. If they are asked to pray, to visit the Blessed Sacrament, to go to confession and holy Communion, they answer, we cannot, we have no time. To stand for hours before the mirror frizzing their hair, powdering their face, arranging their dress, or to spend whole nights dancing, gambling, carousing, — for all this they have an abundance of time. When the ember days or vigils occur, or when the holy season of lent approaches, the very thought of fasting makes them feeble and weak. To fast or abstain is impossible! cries innate effeminacy; it would ruin my health. Sensuality and dissipation require most extraordinary feats of endurance; for instance at a ball or carousal, these persons can endure almost impossibilities. Ah! yes, for the devil and the world, all things can be done; but for God and Heaven, nothing can be endured. To purchase eternal damnation, they have time, money, strength and will; to save their immortal souls, these poor deluded

sinners, who call themselves Christians, can neither move hand nor foot. Oh! terrible blindness, oh! shameful negligence! What a fearful awakening from the intoxication of pleasure will it be for them, when the flickering light of the blessed candle, which they hold in their trembling hands, casts the shadow of death on their agonized features. Ah! then they will see and understand what they did not wish to know and believe; that the world is a base deceiver, a delusion, that there was but one thing necessary, namely, to save their immortal soul, and to secure their eternal happiness. Of this they never thought, for this they had no time, no will. Oh! how bitter are not their tears of sorrow. How gladly would they retrieve what they lost, but in vain. Time will never return, the past cannot be undone. Nothing remains but remorse for their folly, and the account which they must give to the Eternal Judge.

Happy, indeed, the Christian who learns the true wisdom of life while in health, and not only at the hour of death. Happy he who learns from Jesus, that our life on earth

is but a little while. He will not cease to think of the impending eternity; he will save his soul, he will prepare for death by a life of penance and fidelity in the service of God; when that most terrible hour has come, he will watch its approach without fear and trembling, and his soul will calmly depart in the peace of the Lord. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ETERNITY.

"I go to him that sent me."
John 6, 5.

I GO to him that sent me, thus says our Lord to his apostles in the gospel of to-day. Thus He announces His departure from this world and His going to the Father. The same announcement I must make to you in the name of the Lord. You, too, must go to Him who sent you into the world, to labor in His vineyard for the salvation of your soul. Each day, each hour brings you nearer to the end of life's journey. Perhaps soon, yes, sooner than you

imagine, your period of earthly existence will be past; your body will be consigned to the earth, and your soul summoned before the judgment-seat of God. Do you doubt, for a moment, this message coming to you from God, through me, His minister? Ah! if you harbor a thought to the contrary, you must be bereft of your senses. For, day after day, you see plainly the verification of St. Paul's words, "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment." Heb. 9, 27. Day after day, the mournful tolling of the bell brings vividly to our minds the humiliating words of the Creator, "Dust thou art, and into dust, shalt thou return." Gen. 3, 19, that also in you will be fulfilled the saying of the prophet Isaias, "Thy carcass is fallen down, under thee shall the moth be strewed, and worms shall be thy covering." Isaias 14, 11. Have you any certainty when this great day for you will arrive? Will it be after many years or perhaps after a few months or days, aye, even before the sun sets this evening? Can you inform me where death will overtake you, and hand you over to divine justice?

Will it be here in the Church, on the street, in your house, in your bed, or where? Can you tell in what manner death will visit you? Will it be by heart disease, appoplexy, or by accident? Will it be so sudden that you will not be prepared, not receive the last sacraments, or by a lingering disease that will give you time to reconcile your soul with God? Oh! terribly important questions, and yet you cannot answer them; you can merely say with certainty, die I must, and that but once, and in a day, in an hour when I least expect it.

"It is appointed unto man once to die." There is no remedy against death, no means of escape, no prayers or supplications are of any avail. The decree of God will remain unto the end of the world. "It is appointed unto man once to die." My beloved brethren, did you ever seriously reflect on the signification of death? To die! A word of only three letters and yet it signifies the most terrible and dreadful event which a worldly mind can imagine. For, to die, means to leave the world and all that is loved and cherished. To die, means to leave the

home you have occupied, the fields you have tilled, the riches you have accumulated. To die, means to bid farewell to your husband, your wife, your children, to all who are near and dear to you. To die, means that the body will descend into the grave, there to corrupt, to be consumed by worms, and to return to dust. To die, means for your soul to go into eternity to be judged by an omniscient God. Of what? Of all your thoughts, your words, your actions, your desires, in a word, to be judged of your whole life. What kind of a judgment will you have? All you have done, either good or bad, from your earliest years, from the time you came to the use of reason until the moment of your death,—though your actions were committed in the most secret places, though you have long since forgotten them, they will now come to light before the Eternal Judge, who can be moved neither by tears nor groans; but who will pass the judgment which will decide your state for all eternity. For you, what sentence will this Judge pronounce? Heaven or hell, eternal happiness or eternal damnation, a

glorious crown or fiery chains? One of the two will certainly be your lot for all eternity. Eternity! Oh! fearful, incomprehensible word. The world has existed for nearly six thousand years, and this seems to us an immeasurable period. But what are six thousand years when compared to eternity! Take a handful of sand, can you count the number of grains? Imagine the globe to consist of sand, and each grain to represent a century. Now would these millions and millions of centuries make an eternity? Oh! no, not the smallest part of it. Multiply this immense sum by the greatest number you can imagine, and deduct the number of centuries from eternity, and what will remain? The whole eternity. Time will have an end, but eternity, none.

My dear Christians, let us with all the powers of our mind seriously reflect that we are created to exist during this incomprehensible eternity, and that the certain and yet uncertain hour of death will irrevocably decide our fate. Deluded sinner, you must be without a spark of faith or, deprived of your senses, if you continue to live an enemy

of God, risking an eternity of pain, of torture and despair. And you, tepid Christians, can you meditate on the dread eternity, which might begin for you this very day, without resolving to be more zealous in the service of God, without resolving to enkindle the spirit of penance in your heart, without determining, with redoubled zeal, to make reparation for the past? And you, faithful Christian, will any struggle seem too difficult, any suffering too poignant, any sacrifice too great, to save your soul from hell and to gain the eternal crown of glory? Oh! whoever you may be, frequently call to mind the words of Holy Scripture, "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." Eccli. 7, 40. Remember eternity, and you will not attach your heart to the vain and transient goods of this world, you will rather live for the salvation of your soul by a constant preparation for death. Let the foolish children of the world, who do not wish to heed God's solemn warnings, —rush blindly to perdition. We may pray for them, admonish them, but save them, we cannot, without their own co-operation

and God's grace. Let our daily consideration be, that I must go to Him that sent me, to a God of infinite sanctity, and hence I must not de defiled by sin; to a God of retribution, hence I shall enrich myself with virtues and good works that will procure an eternal reward. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

PRAYER IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

> "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you." John 16, 23.

THERE are many prayers and petitions which daily ascend to Heaven, but all are not heard. What is the reason? Has prayer lost its power and efficacy in our days? By no means. God's promises are unchangeable, but very often we do not pray in the name of Jesus and only prayers in His name are heard.

Faith, and even reason teaches us, that in order for our prayer to be heard, it must be said in the proper manner, and it must be

offered for proper purposes. We must pray in the proper manner, that is, our prayer must proceed from a pure heart, or at least, from a penitential heart that asks for God's grace to be freed from sin. If you pray with the lips only, pronouncing words to which you attach no meaning, how can you expect that the Lord of Heaven and earth will hear them? Is it not rather an insult to God, to address Him and not even to observe as much respect as you would when speaking to men. Listen to the admonition given by our Lord in the Old Testament "Before prayer, prepare thy soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God." Eccli. 18, 23. Do not imitate the ungrateful Jews, of whom the Holy Ghost says "This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." Matt. 15, 8. St. Bernard says that God derives as little pleasure from mere lip-prayer as He does from the humming of the bees or the twittering of the birds.

There are many, whose prayers are not only deficient in attention and devotion, but also in the proper disposition of the heart. That our prayers may be heard, they must

proceed either from a pure heart, that is, one free from sin, or from a penitential heart, that is, from a heart, willing to give up all enmity with God. Such persons would not dare to ask a favor from those whom they had grievously injured, without having previously shown some signs of repentance, for well they know, that they would only add insult to injury, and hence would be scorned. They do not hesitate, however, to approach Almighty God without any sorrow for their sins, without any intention of amendment. They are fully aware, that they are enemies of God and are an abomination in His sight, and, yet, they expect to be heard and their petitions granted. Vain attempt! God will not be mocked. Whoever does not approach Him either as a good child or a penitent one, cannot expect to find favor in His sight. We read in the gospel that the man born blind and to whom Jesus restored sight, exclaimed: "Now we know that God does not hear sinners." John 9, 31. The Lord answers the sinner through the prophet Isaias "When you stretch forth your hands, I will turn away My eyes from you, and

when you multiply prayer I will not hear." Isaias 1, 15, and in the book of Proverbs, we read "He that turneth away his ears from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination." Prov. 28, 9. Hence, my dear brethren, I repeat, if we do not wish to pray in vain, let our petitions proceed from a pure, or, at least, from a penitent heart, for God will not hearken to the prayers of those who hate and despise Him.

In order that our prayers be efficacious, we must, in the first place, pray for those things which are beneficial and necessary for the salvation of our souls, and only then for the necessities of life. This is the natural order of things; for the most precious, the eternal, must be preferred and must outrank the perishable and temporal. Thus our Lord teaches us in the gospel "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things will be added unto you." Matt. 6, 33. Alas! however, the majority do not subordinate the temporal goods to the eternal. Their first petitions are for the daily bread, not for the spiritual bread of life, but the temporal, for health,

for comforts, for other corporal benefits, and last of all, come the supplications for the necessities of the soul, for Heaven, for eternal life. They follow the example of the mother of the sons of Zebedee, who came to Jesus and asked "Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, the other on Thy left in Thy kingdom." and Jesus answering said: "You know not what you ask." Matt. 20, 21. Almighty God is often obliged to answer us in the same manner "You know not what you ask." Many Christians ask for things that would be prejudicial to their salvation. They ask for bread and know not that it would be for them a stone. They ask for a fish, not knowing that in their hands it would change into a serpent. They implore God for riches, health and other temporal goods. What, in their estimation would be so beneficial, would, in reality, be most detrimental and perhaps the cause of their eternal damnation. Our Heavenly Father, however, knows and sees all things. Could He, as a beneficient Father, grant such petitions? Certainly not! Hence, in all our

petitions for temporal advantages, which, indeed, we are permitted to offer to God with the greatest confidence, we should always add: Lord grant it, if not prejudicial to my soul. On the other hand, when supplicating for those things which appertain to the welfare of our souls, namely to become better, never to yield to temptation, to correct our faults to overcome our evil habits and inclinations, to acquire virtue and to advance in Christian perfection, for all these things we can pray, not only with child-like confidence, but with the assurance of being heard. Above all, we should frequently ask, with all earnestness and fervor, for Divine assistance in the last hour, and for a happy death. To pray for such things and with proper dispositions, signifies to pray in the name of Jesus, and to such prayer the assurance is given "Amen, amen I say to you ask the Father anything in My name He will give it to you." John 16, 23. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

OUR TESTIMONY FOR CHRIST.

"And you shall give testimony."
John 15, 27.

THAT which our Divine Saviour foretold to the apostles in these words: "And you shall give testimony" was afterwards fulfilled in a most glorious manner. In obedience to the divine command, the apostles went out into the whole world, and gave testimony of their Lord and Master. Testimony in words, by the preaching of the gospel, testimony in acts, by their angelic life, testimony in suffering by the sacrifices they made for Christ, testimony in death by their bloody martyrdom. In a similar manner, we must also show ourselves as true disciples, by giving testimony of Christ in words, and deeds, and sufferings.

We must give testimony of Christ in words. You may not be called, like Saints Peter and John, to take the staff into your hands, and, in apostolic missions, to traverse foreign countries and preach the gospel to pagan

nations, nevertheless, there are many opportunities for instructing the ignorant, admonishing the sinner, comforting the sorrowful and leading the stray sheep back to the fold of the Divine Shepherd. You will find these opportunities in your surroundings, among your friends, and in your families. Do not neglect these occasions, but try, when it is possible, to gain souls for Heaven. "This is the most divine of all divine works" says Pope St. Gregory, "to co-operate in the salvation of souls." To do this, means to rejoice our Lord and His angels, to give great happiness to our fellow-men, and to be a true servant of God. We should, especially, give testimony of Christ in words, by joyfully and courageously professing our faith in, and our adherence to the one true, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. Whenever an occasion demands, we should unhesitatingly and fearlessly guard and defend the honor of our holy Church. To remain a Christian and to be a coward, to belong to Christ and to hide the light of faith under a measure, are contradictions. Our Lord distinctly tells us: "He that is not with me,

is against me." Luke 11, 23, and "he that shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also will be ashamed of him when he shall come in the glory of his Father and his holy angels." Mark. 8, 38.

Not only in words however, must we give testimony of Christ, but also in works, by leading an exemplary life. What St. Paul, in the name of all the apostles, said of himself, should also be said of every God-loving Christian. "And I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me." Gal. 2, 20. Christ must live in us, by our entertaining His sentiments, and following His example. We must imitate Christ in our thoughts, in our words, in our actions, and in our whole life. Christ must live in us, by our conscientiously avoiding sin and the proximate occasions of sin, by faithfully performing the duties of our state of life, and of our holy religion. Christ must live in us by our imitating the divine prototype, in our being meek and humble of heart, in our being obedient and peace-loving, in our being chaste and pure of heart. Christ must live

in us by our entertaining true sentiments of Christian charity towards our neighbor, by our offending none, angering none, insulting none, reviling none, cursing none, hating none, working no evil, but wishing all good, and doing good to all, whenever we can. If we thus fulfil Christ's commandments in all things, then, and then only, shall we give testimony of Him by our lives. Thus the apostles have done, and the saints imitated them, and for us, there is no way of entering Heaven, except by giving testimony in the works of our fidelity and love for Jesus. For our Lord said, "Not every one that saith to me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 7, 21.

And lastly, we must give testimony of Christ by our willingness to accept suffering from the hand of God. Take, for instance, the apostles, for the love of Jesus, how willingly did they not relinquish their homes, their families, everything that was near and dear to them. See how their lives were consumed by apostolic zeal, in untold

trials, sufferings and persecutions. How gloriously did they not stand the test of their love for Christ by martyrdom! Although we may not be asked to drink so bitter a chalice as did the apostles, yet we cannot escape all the tribulations, contempt and scorn of the world, pains and sickness of the body, sorrows and afflictions of the soul, misfortune in our undertakings, misfortune in our family, and many other evils: — for these are the thorns that will strew our pathway through life. My dear Christians, accept these trials with resignation, bear them patiently for the love of your divine Master. Ah! here you have the best opportunity of giving testimony of Jesus, and of showing to the world that you love Him above all things. If God grants you the power of working miracles, He bestows upon you something great, says St. Chrysostom, but not so great a distinction, as by sending you crosses and sufferings: For, by the power of miracles, you become a debtor to God, but by suffering, God becomes indebted to you, for according to His promise, He must give us, as a reward, the eternal

crown of victory. Consoling words, indeed, of so great a doctor of the Church. We should deeply imprint them on our memory, be encouraged to suffer for Jesus, and thus to give testimony of our love, to make satisfaction for our sins, and to gain the eternal reward in Heaven.

In conclusion, my dear Christians, let us follow the example of the apostles, and with a joyful and self-sacrificing spirit, give testimony of Christ, by words, actions and sufferings. On all occasions let our conversations show that we belong to Christ, and that we consider it the greatest honor to believe in the holy gospel, and to be members of His holy Church. Let our lives give testimony that the spirit of Christ lives in us, and brings forth the fruit of virtue. Let patience in sufferings and persecutions be for us, the glorious victory, by which we can conquer the world and its bitter woes. Happy indeed, if we thus live with Jesus, die with Jesus, be His in life and in death, for then only shall we reign with Him in the eternal mansions above. Amen.

PENTECOST.

PEACE WITH GOD. PEACE IN THE WORLD.

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." John 14, 27.

TO-DAY, my dear Christians, we are celebrating the ever, memorable event when the Holy Ghost, amidst the sound of a mighty wind came upon His Holy Church. The Paraclete, the Divine Comforter descended upon the Church, the Dispenser of all graces, to bestow upon us that holy, consolatory peace which our Lord promised us in the Gospel, and which He left us with His blessing as a precious inheritance. That peace which the world knows not and which can only be found in union with God, and in the possession of a good conscience. This peace differs vastly from that which the children of the world seek. They are unacquainted with any peace but that of wealth, honor and pleasure. The glittering gold, silver and precious stones are their joys; whatever gratifies their desires, their appetites, and they have no conception of any other pleasure except that which satisfies their senses.

Let us rationally consider the peace and contentment of mind which the children of the world seek and expect to find in their wealth and pleasure. The avaricious man seeks his peace in the acquisition of gold. It is true, gold can purchase many things which will add materially to the enjoyment of life. But tell me, O miser, why is your face so pallid, why are your eyes so sunken, why, with all your wealth, is your body so emaciated, why are your clothes so filthy and ragged, and why are you so much despised by every one? Is this the peace which mammon gives? If so, keep it for yourself we do not envy you. And you, fornicator, what kind of peace does impurity bring you? Is it the satisfaction of the shameful vice in which you indulge? Your health is undermined, you are the scorn of the world, held in contempt by all well-minded people. Do the pangs of conscience you endure, the shame you feel, do these things bring you peace of mind? And how are you affected by the words of the apostle St. Paul "For know you this and understand that no fornicator or unclean . . . person . .

hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Eph. 5, 5. Are these words apt to bring peace to your mind? And you, O drunkard, wherein do you seek your peace? In pouring maddening liquor down your throat? But what does your health, your character and reputation, your family consider this peace? And what kind of peace does your conscience find in the words of St. Paul "No drunkards . . shall possess the kingdom of God." I. Cor. 6, 10.

Behold Absolom striving amidst a thousand pains and cares to take possession of his father's throne! He forces himself forward until his hair becomes entangled in the branches of a tree, and, hanging there, his ambitious heart is pierced with a lance. There we see the glutton spending his life in the enjoyment of the palate, and what is his end? He is buried in hell. See the Israelites before Mt. Sinai, feasting and dancing, intoxicated with pleasure, around the golden calf. But how short-lived is their joy. The faithful Levites rush forward and three and twenty thousand are slain without mercy. Shall I continue, my dear

Christians, repeating examples to show the peace man finds in the service and slavery of the devil? Shall I continue to show you the tears, the misery, the bitterness, the despair which it brings? Would you call this peace? What a perversion of the term! Poor children of the world, how deluded you are by the prince of darkness; how your mind has been clouded by his deceits! Oh, that a ray of divine grace would illuminate your darkened intellect, and show where true peace is to be found. Not in the world and its miseries, not in sin and its deceptive pleasures, but in God alone, and in the possession of a good conscience.

"The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." I. Cor. 2, 9. This sublime saying refers principally to our glory in Heaven, but for this life also it contains a deep signification. If I am a child of God, I have heaven in my heart and enjoy, even in this valley of tears, a foretaste of the heavenly bliss in store for the good. I may be poor and deprived of everything which

the world calls good fortune, still I shall be wealthier and more contented than a king on his throne, for if God is my possession, I have everything that can satisfy my heart and make me happy. If I am a child of God, and you deprive me of all my possessions, I may grieve for the loss, but I shall rejoice that being less encumbered, I hasten on the path that leads to my eternal home, for "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." The storms of this life may gather threateningly above my head, sickness and misfortune, trials and tribulations may destroy the foundations of hope, if I am a child of God I shall not despair, but with perfect confidence in God, raise my eyes to Heaven, knowing that there reigns my Father, who transforms all my afflictions to my gain, who often afflicts most those whom He loves best. If I am told that death is at my threshold — death it is true, is a bitter word,—but if I am a child of God, I shall not tremble, for death to a good Christian, means to exchange the cares and trials of the world for an eternal peace of Heaven.

Oh, happy, thrice happy to be a child of God and to possess a good conscience, to be able to call God our Father. Truly, this is the peace which our Lord promises us in the gospel of this day, a peace, which according to St. Paul, transcends all understanding. Let us, above all things, preserve this precious gem, the peace of God, and should any of us be so unfortunate as to have lost it, let us hasten to regain it by a reconciliation with God, by a good confession. Let us fight the good fight, avoid all scandal and dangerous amusements and the proximate occasions of sin. Let us, by fervent prayer, by meditation on death, by placing ourselves in the presence of God, by a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and especially by frequenting the sacraments, seek to gain that power and strength which enabled St. Paul to exclaim "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." May the peace of God be our portion in this life and our eternal happiness in the next. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE BLESSED TRINITY.

"Teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Matt. 28, 20.

OF all the mysteries of our holy faith there is none so unfathomable, as that of the Blessed Trinity. When speaking to you of any other feast of the Church, I can, as far as my poor abilities permit, generally explain the nature of the feast to be commemorated and depict the truth in such a manner that it becomes plain and intelligible to you. To-day, however, we are celebrating a mystery which is beyond the intellectual reach of any created being, which is incomprehensible to either men or angels. Concerning this mystery, there can be no conjecturing or theorizing, nothing will avail us, but an humble faith. Thou hast revealed it, O Lord, in the sublime commandment of baptism, that there is one God in three divine persons, God the Father, God the

Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and these three divine persons are not three gods, but one God, having one and the same indivisible nature and substance. Thy word is more certain than the testimony of my senses, or the reasoning of my intellect, these faculties are subject to error, but Thou art the eternal and infallible truth.

Hiero, king of Syracuse, once asked the heathen philosopher Simonides: What is God? Simonides, having reflected some time said he could not immediately answer the question, but begged for time to reflect. At first he asked for one day, then for two, and being pressed for an answer replied: The longer I meditate on the nature of God, the more mysterious and incomprehensible the divinity appears. This saying of the heathen philosopher, my dear Christians, is applicable to our state of mind. By divine revelation our knowledge concerning God, His perfections, and attributes, immeasurably transcends that of the heathen, yet there are many truths of religion, viz: the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, the Blessed Sacrament, which remain unfathomable

mysteries to our finite intellect. Are these mysteries obstacles to faith? Ah, no, a thousand times no: To consider them obstacles would be to act as a person without reason, — to act as an infidel. To refuse to accept divine revelations as true, would be the same as to declare to the infinite Wisdom: You either know no better and cannot teach me the truth, or You withhold it intentionally. You are either an ignoramus or a liar. These are the sentiments of one refusing to believe a mystery revealed by God, because man denies credence only to an ignorant person or a liar. Now, my dear brethren, would such sentiments not be the greatest blasphemy, would not such wickedness be deserving of the eternal hell, with which God threatens to punish all impiety? They certainly would, for God will not be mocked.

To reject a mystery because it surpasses our comprehension, would secondly be the height of absurdity. How limited would our belief be, were we to give credence only to that which we understand. There are thousands of mysteries surrounding us daily in nature, which we cannot comprehend and

yet we believe them. You see the farmer, for instance, sowing seed and behold a plant or a tree springs forth, bearing a hundred fold; can you understand the process, you know that the sap ascends from the ground into the tree, and that the same sap changes into wood, into leaves, into fruit. Can you or any scientist comprehend the secret of nature? No. Naturalists may explain the fact, more minutely, but the ultimate reason why and how the same sap is changed into so many different forms remains a mystery. Without citing numerous examples, these instances suffice to remind us that although we daily con the lessons of nature, yet they will remain for us a closed book, sealed with seven seals.

Now, my dear brethren, if we cannot understand nature, although we daily study it and make experiments therein, how can we expect to comprehend the Creator of nature? We, who with our limited intelligence cannot understand the finite, wish to comprehend the infinite! we wish to understand the essence and nature of God! If this were possible, God might descend from

His throne of omnipotence and say to His creatures: "Come, ye children of men, I shall divide My kingdom, for what I can do, you are also able to perform." Hence, my dear brethren, there is nothing wiser and more rational, than that we bow down our limited intellect in all humility before the infinite wisdom of God, and accept the infallible words of His divine revelation in total submission confessing: O Lord, I firmly believe, though I cannot understand, I adore, though I cannot comprehend, for Thou canst neither deceive, nor be deceived, whereas I am a creature capable of being deceived and led into error.

This is the language of a true disciple of Christ, these are the sentiments of a true Christian, when his holy religion propounds God's infallible truths which are beyond the range of his intelligence. These ought to be our sentiments, particularly to-day, when the Church reminds us of the most incomprehensible of all mysteries and asks us to adore the Blessed Trinity. Let us profess, believe and adore in all humility, with all the fervor of a true Christian heart the one

and only true God in three divine persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, co-eternal and co-equal in all things. We profess and believe that the Father is true God, possessing the divine nature and all perfections, that the Son and Holy Ghost possess the same as the Father; that these three persons are not three gods, but one God. We profess and believe that these three divine persons are from eternity, all three having equal power and majesty, that the Father exists of Himself from all eternity, that the Son is begotten of the Father from all eternity, and that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son from all eternity.

Penetrated with this divine faith, we shall never forget the great blessings we have received from the adorable Trinity, having been created by the Father according to His own image and likeness, redeemed by the precious Blood and death of the Son, sanctified and enriched with graces by the Holy Ghost. Let us resolve to thank the triune God daily for these inestimable benefits, and show our gratitude by the sincerity of

our love, by the purity of our adoration, and by the conscientious observance of the commandments, in order that we shall be worthy to see face to face, and to possess forever the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FREQUENT COMMUNION.

"A certain man made a great supper, and invited many." Luke 14, 16.

THE great supper spoken of in the gospel of this Sunday, is a figure of that heavenly banquet which our divine Saviour instituted on the eve of His passion, and to which He invited all, who by faith have become His disciples. Why is it that so few appear at this heavenly banquet? Why do the majority, like the invited guests in the gospel, make excuses and refuse to come? Ah, it is because they do not consider the great dignity of Him who prepared the banquet, because they do not compre-

hend the inestimable value of the Food prepared for them, and because they do not realize the corporal and spiritual misery into which they are plunged. For if they realized all these things, they would certainly approach the table of the Lord more frequently, with true devotion and earnest desire to strengthen their souls with this Bread of the Angels.

No matter from what point of view we consider our life, we shall find it surrounded by miseries of all kinds and threatened by innumerable dangers. If we examine our hearts we shall find it filled with evil inclinations, and assaulted by wicked temptations. Weakness and indolence towards doing good, are the marked features of our hearts. If we look around us, we find bad examples, scandals, allurements and proximate occasions of sin. If we consider our body, we find it subject to ailments, sickness, exposed to dangers of life and limb, and daily, nay hourly approaching the grave; and if we contemplate eternity, must we not fear and tremble at the thought of what our judgment will be and if we shall gain eternal bliss.

Now, my dear Christians, where can we find a better safeguard against all dangers and temptations, where find a better, greater source of spiritual strength, were find a surer remedy to heal the wounds of the soul than at the table of the Lord! In the Blessed Sacrament, says St. Jerome, our Divine Saviour is all for us, all for body, all for soul, all for time and all for eternity.

If the devil tempts you with his allurements, if concuspiscence assaults you, if the wicked world lays its snares, behold in the heavenly manna of the Blessed Sacrament you will find rest and security for your soul. In Holy Communion, Jesus, the mighty God, comes into your heart saying as He did to His disciples on the stormy sea: Why do you fear, you of little faith, it is I who am with you, and I will not permit you to perish. I preserved the three young men in the fiery furnace at Babylon, and I will also preserve and protect you. My dear Christians, would that you might listen to this voice of grace, that you would frequently receive our Lord in holy Communion! You would then receive from the sacred heart of

Jesus all the graces you need to obtain your salvation. You would receive heroic strength to combat Satan and sin; divine protection in times of perils and temptations; heavenly joy in the performance of good works, and the grace to walk perseveringly and steadfastly in the thorny road to Heaven. Your Saviour has prepared all these graces for you at His heavenly banquet, why then will not you, His disciple, accept His invitation and partake of it?

If you are overwhelmed with bodily suffering, overtaken by misfortune, the table of the Lord is again the refuge of the afflicted. As the fatal fruit of the tree in the garden of Paradise, brought not only death to the soul, but also sickness, distress, poverty, and all the ailments of the body and the miseries of the world, so will also the Bread of the angels, the Blessed Sacrament, give not only spiritual graces to the soul, but also temporal blessings for the body, provided they are beneficial for the soul. For what blessings may we not expect from that Divine Saviour who brought so much relief to the sick in the distant land of

Judea. If health were restored to those who only touched the hem of His garments, how much more relief, consolation, and strength may not we expect when we receive in our hearts the God of all consolation?

The Blessed Sacrament is, moreover, the pledge of our everlasting happiness. If, during this life, we frequently receive our Lord into our hearts, we have, as it were, a right to expect to be received by our Divine Guest into His heavenly mansions. This He has promised when He said: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day." John 6, 55.

Truly, should not he have a happy death and receive eternal happiness who has always dearly loved Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, who has frequently been united to Him in holy Communion and who has thus made his whole life a pious preparation for death!

Behold, my dear brethren, how immeasurably great are the benefits of frequent, worthy communions. Should not an earnest desire, a zealous fervor be awakened in our

hearts for this source of all blessings! Let us often approach the table of the Lord with angelic preparation, where we receive Jesus Christ, where the soul is filled with graces, where we receive the pledge of eternal life. He who loves God and is desirous of saving his soul, will not only understand my words, but will also follow them. Hence, in conclusion, I will remind you of the words of the Holy Ghost: "When thou shalt sit to eat with a prince, consider diligently what is set before thy face." Prov. 23, 1.

Yes, consider diligently what is set before you. It is the Sacred Body, the Most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Would it not be the most terrible insult to God, to have an abhorrence for this heavenly food? Consider diligently what is set before you. Must not its infinite value rouse your heart frequently to taste its sweetness! Consider your own weakness, the dangers and temptations surrounding you, and you will most earnestly desire the heavenly food which will bring you strength, consolation, help and protection. Yes, consider dili-

gently, what is set before you; your faith must indeed be weak, if you do not strive to receive more frequently our Lord in holy Communion, this pledge of your glorious resurrection. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

CONVERSION OF SINNERS.

"I say to you that even so there shall be joy in Heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance."

Luke 15, 7.

IN this day's gospel, our Divine Saviour shows Himself under the figure of the good shepherd, who leaves the ninety-nine sheep in security and seeks the lost one to bring it back to the fold. By this act He proclaims not only the infinite mercy of God, towards sinners, but His divine example which says to us, go and do likewise; be a good shepherd to your brother, and save his soul from eternal perdition.

Verily, my dear Christians, there can be no more sublime, no holier work, nor one more pleasing to God than that which is mentioned as the first of the spiritual works of mercy. To admonish sinners? Can we do a more charitable act, one more beneficial to our neighbor, and more meritorious for ourselves, than to save our neighbor's soul from perdition, and bring it back to God? How easy has not Almighty God made the practice of this great work of mercy? To assist the poor, riches are required, to go to the heathen and to preach the gospel, one must be a priest. To recall the sinner from his evil ways, however, requires neither riches nor sacerdotal dignity, all that is necessary is a sincere love for God and one's neighbor. This love will teach you the best manner of approaching your erring brother, will give you the words that will best appeal to his heart, will give you perseverance, again and again to entreat him to save his soul by true penance. It is by such words of love that our Divine Saviour, that the apostles and all the zealous missionaries have achieved their greatest triumphs of

conversions. And it is by such words of love and compassion, that you, although not priests, can be missionaries, save souls for Heaven, become the greatest benefactors of your neighbor. On your part, it is only required that you are willing to be used as an instrument of God's infinite mercy.

Do not, however, forget that besides the sermon of words, there is also a sermon of example. Where the example and the words do not coincide the best admonitions produce no more beneficial effects than to cast sand into the air, or to pour water into defective vessels. If your erring brother sees you doing the things which you so kindly admonish him to perform, then only does he feel the full force of your words, then only will he be convinced of the truth of counsels and the sincerity of your advice. Your virtuous example becomes a continued sermon, and one which will impress him most powerfully and attract him to imitation. Hence, my dear brethren, let the light of your good works, of your virtuous lives shine forth that the sinner may see it, be edified and induced to follow it.

If there is question of giving admonitions and instructions, one or the other might excuse himself for want of experience, but no one can excuse himself from giving good example; God demands this of all for many reasons, one of which is that it is to be a means for the conversion of sinners.

There is moreover a third requisite to accomplish the work of converting the sinner. We must not only admonish him with love and patience, not only edify him by good example, we must also pray for him and beseech God to have mercy on him. Human efforts alone will not suffice to open the eyes of the erring one and move his heart to contrition, this can be done only by the grace of God. "I have planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the increase" says St. Paul. I. Cor. 3, 6. Hence we must, above all things, pray often and fervently for the conversion of sinners. Prayer is a weapon which the hardest hearts cannot always resist. The prayers and tears of St. Monica brought about the change of heart in the sinner Augustine and converted him into St. Augustine, a doctor of the Church.

Such miracles of grace which are even greater than the creation of the world, are effected even now by prayer when it rises perseveringly to Heaven from a pure, pious and Christian heart.

You know now, my dear Christian, how you can assist in bringing back the lost sheep to the fold. You must patiently and perseveringly labor with word, prayer and example. If you have not undertaken the good work, resolve to begin to-day. If you are successful in saving but one soul for Heaven, you have conferred a benefit on your brother greater than that which can be imagined; you have given joy to Heaven beyond your conception, for you have saved a soul which is more precious than the whole creation, and the angels will rejoice in Heaven "Upon one sinner that doth penance more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance." Moreover, you will receive the everlasting gratitude of the one you have saved, and the glorious reward awaiting you in the next world, will be an infinite recompense for what you have done for the love of God.

But even if your persevering efforts are useless, if all your fervent love cannot soften the hard heart of your erring brother, be not disheartened, think not that your labor of love was in vain, for God looks not only to the deed, rewards not only according to the work you accomplish, He regards the intention, and will therefore give you the same reward as if you had succeeded in bringing back the lost sheep to the fold, in saving the soul of your erring brother. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

SAVE YOUR SOUL.

"Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice and all these things shall be added unto you."
Matt. 6, 33.

MY dearly beloved brethren, we learn from this day's gospel that, after the miraculous draught of fish, our Divine Saviour, surrounded by a great multitude who were desirous to hear the word of God, went into

Simon's that is Peter's ship and taught the people the words of eternal life. Our Lord having first provided for the necessities of the soul and then attending to the sustenance of the body, teaches us by His divine example, what we read on nearly every page of the gospel, namely, that our first care should be devoted to the salvation of our immortal soul, and that our frail body should receive only secondary attention. Even the natural order of things requires that the first and greatest attention be paid to the more precious and imperishable in preference to the lesser and decaying. When there is question of the weal or woe of an eternity, all temporal considerations must be regarded as naught.

But alas, no sacred truth of our holy religion is so little appreciated and so lightly considered as the holy and important doctrine of the infinite value of the soul. Of what does the life of the majority of men consist but in cringing and craving for the dust of the earth? To accumulate wealth, to enjoy some pleasures, men race from post to pillar, day and night, and find no sacrifice too

great, no labor too difficult. But to save their soul, this nobler part of themselves, this treasure which has been purchased by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, about this so few seem to think or care. There are many who appear not even to know that they have an immortal soul, much less do they use all their endeavors to sanctify it by a virtuous life.

If the body suffers any ailment, what lamenting and groaning, the physician is immediately called, the costliest and most disagreeable medicines are taken without complaint. No matter how painful the surgical operation or amputation may be, it is gladly submitted to, provided precious health may be restored. If, however, the soul is sick, sick unto death, yes even spiritually dead, separated from God by mortal sin, on the brink of hell and liable to fall into this pit at any moment and eternally damned, what do they care? They talk and laugh, dance and amuse themselves as if nothing were to happen. They permit weeks and months, yes, years to pass without presenting themselves before the phy-

sician of the soul in the confessional, to be restored to the state of grace and thus saved from eternal perdition.

Oh, what sad blindness, what dreadful negligence! for "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt. 16, 26, says our Lord. What will it profit you, my dear Christians, if you gain all the riches of this world, if you rule the universe, if your whole life is one continued round of pleasures and enjoyments, if you lose your soul and are buried in the dreadful flames of hell! There are millions of souls who would not be warned during life and who now dwell in the terrible abode of pain and whose cries of despair and sufferings ring through hell and which will continue forever. The same fate will be yours, O sinner, if you do not amend your life. Even should you by penance in your last hour escape the wrath of God, what a fearful awakening will you not have? There you will acknowledge what now you will not believe, how foolish and insane you have been to spend your precious time in

the service of a treacherous world instead of preparing for eternity. You will be similar to Philip II, king of Spain who on his death-bed amidst tears exclaimed: Oh, that I had retired to the desert as a hermit and served my God, instead of spending my life in seeking the vanities and pleasures of this world! Now I must appear before my God, with empty hands and alas, with so many sins!

O, my dear Christians, consider well "the things that are to thy peace" Luke 19, 42; consider them in time whilst they may still be for thy salvation. Tear yourself away from the sinful vanities of the world which can, not even in this life, make you happy, but which at the hour of death will pierce your heart with their biting sting. Give your heart to God, dedicate your life to the service of Heaven, save, oh, save your immortal soul! Consider every day that death will take away all your temporal goods and will leave you only two things, your sins and your good works. Erase your past misdeeds by true penance, lay up for yourself — if heretofore you have not done so —

stores of virtues, good works and merits for Heaven, that they may follow you into eternity and procure for you a lenient judgment. Truly then can you peacefully commend your soul into the hands of the Eternal Judge, in the certainty of the everlasting reward. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON ANGER.

"Be angry and sin not."
Eph. 4, 26.

IN the gospel of this day, our Divine Saviour warns us so earnestly against the sin of anger. We should not only arm ourselves with good intentions, but we should also make use of the means necessary to overcome this vice, and endeavor earnestly to root it out of our heart. Now, what must we do to accomplish this, and what weapons must we use successfully to overcome this enemy which slumbers in our hearts? My answer is, if you wish to guard

yourself against the insanity of anger, if you desire earnestly to overcome your passionate nature, you must, first of all, take refuge in prayer, begging God daily to infuse into your heart the virtues of meekness and patience. Frequently during the day represent to yourself the image of your suffering Saviour, how willingly and uncomplainingly He offered His pains and sufferings to His Heavenly Father. Consider how He prayed for His murderers on the cross, and then say to yourself: You, my Jesus are the Son of God, I am only a poor sinner, and I wish to give way to anger! You prayed and forgave, and I wish to nourish hatred! Ah, no, in penance for my sins, I will willingly and without complaint offer to you all the injustice and insults I have to endure. Thus, dear Christians, you should think, speak and act whenever the passion of anger is aroused in your heart, and with God's grace you shall certainly gain the victory.

Consider daily before mingling with the world, the probable occurrences which might arouse your anger and thus arm yourself in

advance against this passion by good resolutions. To-day, for instance, say, I might become angry on account of my wife's contradictions, or on account of the disobedience of my children, or the negligence of the servants, what shall I do? Grow excited, curse and quarrel? No, for love of my Saviour, I will overcome myself and appear as if I had heard and seen nothing. Sweet Jesus, assist me. Thus you can arm yourself against anger before it rises.

You must also give a proof of your fidelity to your good resolutions. During the day, you are really insulted, your blood begins to boil, your tongue is ready to pour forth the most abusive language, what will you do? How protect yourself? My dear Christians, overcome yourself and say not a word until your passion has subsided. A pagan philosopher advised the emperor Augustus, whenever, he felt the passion of anger rising in his heart, to repeat the alphabet, until the passion was calmed, in order that he might not do or say anything for which he would be sorry. My dear Christians, I can give you even better advice, namely, when-

ever you feel angry, say the Lord's prayer and repeat it until your soul, by its commune with God, has been restored to a state of tranquility.

But, perhaps, you cannot look calmly at your adversary, then leave him. Flight, in this case, is the only means to escape defeat. If your neighbor insults you on the street, pass him by or turn away and cross over to the other side without making any reply. If it happens in your own house, rise and leave the room for a few moments, and ask God for patience. Thus acted the pious Tobias when he was angered by his wife. Hearing a strange kid bleating in his yard, he, with best intentions, remonstrated with her. But she became so enraged that she upbraided him with bitter invectives. Tobias said not a word, but left, and fell on his knees in prayer. This, my dear Christians, is the best way to meet insults; if all would act thus, what great peace and happiness would reign in families! In the beginning, it is usually a trifle which causes disagreement. Had we a little humility and were we to practice a little self-denial, the discord would seldom continue.

Christian parents, it is especially your duty to practice the rules of Christian meekness when your children anger you, by their bad behavior. If kind admonitions are useless, you are indeed obliged to punish them, but never do so in anger. For whenever passion takes the rod to chastise, it always trespassess the limits of moderation, cursing and imprecations pour forth, and the corrector does more harm than good. Postpone the punishment until your mind is calmed and then inflict it with great love for your children and a hatred only for their vices.

If you have been so unfortunate, as to have yielded to the passion of anger, reflect as soon as you realize what you have done, be sorry for your fault and ask God's forgiveness. Say to yourself: What have I achieved by my anger? Was it really worth while to get excited over such a trifle? Ah, what foolish language have I used? How severe and bitter were my words, and how deeply have I hurt my neighbor, and all for such nonsence! If I had overcome myself, I would have merited many graces and a heavenly reward. Now I have shame and remorse of conscience.

Thus, my dear Christians, address yourself, make an act of contrition, renew your pious resolution of avoiding the same fault, be not discouraged, but rely on God's aid, and you shall gain the victory, and with it the eternal crown, which has been promised to all who have learned from Jesus to be meek and humble of heart. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES.

"And they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets."
Mark 8, 8.

HOW benevolent and charitable did not our Lord show Himself to the thousands of hungry people on the occasion related in the gospel of this sunday. Severe towards Himself, He abstained from food during the forty days in the desert; He endured the greatest pangs of hunger, rather than by a miracle to alleviate His sufferings. On this occasion, however, when He sees

the hungry multitude, His heart is immediately moved with pity and He says: "I have compassion on the multitude." He expressed His sympathy not only in words but in deeds. He uses His omnipotence to work an astounding miracle, and thus provides bread for his famished followers. His divine example of compassionate charity admonishes us to go and do likewise.

Yes, go and do likewise! How can we call ourselves disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ! How glory in fulfilling God's first and greatest commandment, if charity towards our neighbor consists only in words, if having coldly and unfeelingly expressed our commiseration we dismiss the poor and needy without giving them assistance. "My little children," says the apostle of love "let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." I John 3, 18.

And the prophet Isaias (58, 7) teaches us in what these deeds of love consist: "Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and the harborless into thy house; when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh." Remember,

furthermore, my dear brethren, the commands of our Saviour and do not forget them. To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to assist the needy, this is the great commandment, and in the fulfillment of it He will, at the hour of their death, recognize His disciples.

How singular! As if all depends on the fulfillment of this one commandment; our Lord promises not only the great reward of eternal glory, but even in this life such a plentitude of blessings, that no one can be sordid and hard-hearted against the poor, without working against his own interests, for "He that giveth to the poor shall not want, he that despiseth his entreaty, shall suffer indigence." Prov. 28, 27. says Scripture and the royal psalmist says "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor, the Lord will deliver him in the evil day. The Lord will preserve him, and give him life and make him blessed upon the earth and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies." Ps. 40, 2–3. And our Lord Himself assures us: "Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure and

pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." Luke 6, 38.

At one time when Alexander the Great went through Asia on his march of victory, ambassadors of several tribes came to him, offering him presents of gold, silver and precious stones, begging him to accept them and, in return, give them peace and protection. Alexander said that he had not come to rob them of their own, but on the contrary, to make them happy. In a similar manner Almighty God in asking us for alms for His poor, does not ask because He is in need of them, for He is infinitely rich, He does not ask to deprive us of what He has given, but He asks in order that by our generosity we may exercise the beautiful virtues of charity, that we may thus make ourselves worthy of His blessings and mercy, and that He may reward us a hundredfold.

Many years ago, a rich and very charitable man, who was undoubtedly deeply impressed with this truth had prepared the following

inscription for his tombstone: What I have given to the world was once my own but is no longer mine; what I have given to the poor is still my own, for by their hands I have sent it to Heaven. The poor may be compared to a field wherein every seed sown takes root and bears fruit a hundredfold. The alms you give to the poor is a capital lent to God, who rewards even a drink of cold water given in His name.

Go then, my dear brethren, and put in practice the lesson you have learned to-day. Procure for yourselves blessings in this life, mercy in death, heavenly reward in eternity, by your charity towards the brothers and sisters of our Lord, namely the poor and the needy. Follow as far as possible the good counsel of Tobias. "According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity; For alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the

most high God, to all them that give it." Tobias 4, 8–12. Amen.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

SAVE YOUR CHILDREN.

"Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit." Matt. 7, 17.

AS the tree, so is the fruit, we are told in the gospel of this Sunday, and we may justly say as the parents, so are the children. Good tree, good fruit!—Good parents, good children; evil tree, evil fruit!—Evil parents, evil children. It is only too true that it will occasionally happen, that a child of the best parents will succumb to temptation, and again, that a child which had been totally neglected will, through God's infinite grace and mercy lead an exemplary life. But these are exceptions which do not repeat the general truth, that children will become naught but what parents make them, either good men or vagabonds, either exemplary

Christians or scandalous ruffians, either saints for Heaven or reprobates for hell.

If you wish to be convinced of this truth, enter in spirit into the homes of the different members of this congregation and watch the manners and the behavior of the children. What a contrast will you not find! Here, children like angels, who seem to bear their parents on their hands, who by their innocence and piety, by their peacefulness and good behavior edify every one, who are a credit to the whole congregation, in fact, to the whole community in which they live. In another home you will find children, who by their shameful behavior, cause their parents to shed bitter tears of sorrow, who by their wickedness, their immorality and depravity, by their contempt of every law of God and of men, are a pest, and a scandal to the whole community. Whence this difference of behavior and morality? The cause is this, in the one family the parents conscientiously perform their parental duties as representatives of God, in the other, the parents disgrace the names of father and mother by trampling under foot their parental duties,

and as representatives of Satan, lead their children to destruction.

In ancient times, the Greek lawgiver, Lycurgus of Sparta, decreed that the parents were to be punished with the children for the crimes of the latter, as he was convinced that the parents having neglected to form the morals of their children were the sole cause of their crimes.

If, during youth, your children have been placed on the right or wrong road, their future life will usually trend in the direction of the road on which they have been placed. This truth is most pointedly expressed in holy Scripture "A young man according to his way even when he is old, he will not depart from it." Prov. 22, 6. Hence nothing is more certain than that the weal or woe of the children for their whole life depends on the parents. Their abode in Heaven or hell for all eternity depends principally on the seeds which the parents sow in the hearts of their children.

Christian parents, consider well what a great responsibility is placed in your hands. What happiness will not be yours on earth

and in Heaven, if you conscientiously do your duty towards your children; if you, as true representatives of God, preserve their innocence and guide them in the path of virtue. If you lead to Heaven those children whom you received as angels at the baptismal font you will have a heaven on earth with good children who love, honor and obey you, who think only of contributing to your happiness. Your terrestrial bliss, however, is but a shadow of the heavenly one promised by our Lord as a reward for your fidelity in guarding the precious souls which He has given to your care.

On the other hand what woe and misery will you not prepare for yourselves in this life and what eternal despair in the next, if through your fault, through your negligence, one of your children should be lost. What remorse of conscience for time and eternity will not be yours, if by your wicked example or by want of proper watchfulness you have actually led your children on the road to sin and ruin. Supposing you have saved your soul by sincere penance, but have caused that of your child to go to perdition, what

will you answer on the last day when you find this child among the damned, and are accused by it as the cause of its damnation? What will you answer when your child will say: I do not accuse you, my God, of injustice, but I accuse my parents as the cause of my eternal ruin. They did not warn me, they did not teach me better, they placed me on the road to hell and did not restrain me; I ask the everlasting curse of God to fall on their heads. What will you answer to the cry of despair when your child sinks into the eternal flames of hell, and you must acknowledge that it is through your fault!

Christian Parents, can you contemplate this impending doom for yourself and children, and still be indifferent to your parental duties? Ah, bewail with bitter tears of deep contrition your former negligence, if in the proper care of your children you have been guilty, and firmly resolve to repair with redoubled energy the injury you have done to their souls. Teach them by word and example to know God, to serve Him, to fear His punishments, but above all, to love God. Be their teachers in virtue, their

example in leading a Christian life, their guardian angels in their inexperience amidst the many dangers that surround them and that threaten to destroy their faith and their innocence. In one word, Christian parents, with God's grace, do all you can, to save your children, by giving them a good Christian education, to preserve them for Heaven, and thus to ensure your own welfare for time and eternity. Amen.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INJUSTICE.

'Know you not, that the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God?'' I. Cor. 6, 9.

THE unjust steward of whom we read in the gospel narrative, has many followers. For alas, honesty and integrity—who can deny it—have become in our times very rare virtues. Children pilfer, the young steal, the elders defraud. In their youth they learned to distinguish between mine

and thine, but in later years they seem to have forgotten it. The jails and penitentiaries receive their disgraced inmates from all classes of society; from the rich and the poor, the ignorant and the highly educated, the slums, and the elite of society. These are, indeed, deplorable facts of our age, and whose mind is not filled with sad forebodings for the future if this is continued? The saddest part of this fearful, yet undeniable fact is, that there are thousands of men daily committing acts of injustice, without even a pang of conscience, without so much as considering it a sin in the sight of the omniscient God.

For instance, here is a servant, a relation of the unjust steward, who for years pilfered his master, either by withholding small sums of money from purchases made, or by taking things for his own use, or by distributing them among relatives. If you call such a one to account for these thefts and acts of injustice, you may perhaps receive the following answer: Oh, these things are mere trifles, my master or mistress will not miss them. Besides the wages are low, and I

wish to be dressed as well as other people. Thus speaks the dishonest servant; theft is no longer a sin. There is a merchant possessed by the demon of mammon, who hesitates not to pass off his worthless or inferior goods for the best merchandise, who hesitates not to take advantage of the ignorance of his buyers, who deliberately cheats them in giving short measure and light weight. If you called such a merchant by the name which the commission of his injustice deserves, he would feel grossly insulted and say: You do not understand these matters, this is business, all merchants do this; how could I expect to make money otherwise, besides I must pay my taxes and and make a living. So speaks the dishonest merchant, he no longer understands the obligation of the seventh commandment. There are others who even take advantage of the poor laborer, overcharging him because he must come to them for trust, or compelling him to buy from them under threat of dismissing him from work, and then charging him the highest possible price for their goods; enriching themselves by the

extortion they practice on the poor laboring man. If you remind these scoundrels that such injustice cries to Heaven for vengeance, they will answer: We must make our losses good, besides the wages of the laborers are too high. This fearful injustice is not considered a sin. On the other hand, you find workmen, who neglect their labor or do it badly and who are perfectly satisfied providing they can cover up the defects and prevent their dishonesty from being detected. Speak to such a workman or mechanic about his injustice, he will be surprised and answer: This is the way we work now, they all do it, and I don't want to work more than others. Do you think I wish to render myself a cripple by my labor?

Thus, my dear Christians, you see the dishonest know how to excuse every species of injustice, they find a mantle to cover every fraud, and attempt to make themselves and others believe there is no wrong committed. But wait, ye thieves and dishonest companions of the unjust steward, the hour will come, when you must give an account of your stewardship, that is of your life.

Then the veil which you wove will fall from your eyes, then your slumbering conscience will awake and, to your consternation, you will discover that the God who on Sinai's Mount gave the commandment, Thou shalt not steal, still enforces this law. Then you will become aware that the fires of hell are still burning for those who assisted in making this world a vast and an immense den of thieves. Thousands and millions would not be warned, they enriched themselves with ill-gotten gain, and now their cries of eternal woe resound in the abyss of hell, and stolen goods and ill-gotten gains adhere to them like burning coals and will consume them for all eternity.

Oh, that their deplorable, but irremediable condition would deeply impress you! Oh, that it would teach you to abhor a sin which calls God's vengeance upon you during life and in the hour of death places the stinging viper of despair on the heart of man! Behold the terrible condition of the unjust! Sincere repentance will procure God's mercy for every other crime, for theft and injustice, however, there is no mercy until the ill-got-

ten gain is restored. And this is the rock on which the souls of so many are wrecked. An injustice is easily committed, but with difficulty repaired. In confession, the unjust man will either remain silent about his great crime of injustice, or he will accuse himself without being fully determined to restore the ill-gotten gain, and to make reparation. And what is the fearful consequence! He commits a sacrilege and keeps his unjust possessions, and then heaps crime upon crime, and sacrilege upon sacrilege, until, at last, an impenitent death takes his soul and buries it with Dives in hell.

My dear Christians, let us therefore, take warning and beware of any species of injustice. Sooner cut off our hand than stretch it out for unjust goods. Rather suffer the greatest poverty and privation, than sell our soul to the devil for mammon. Let us not envy any one his possessions, but in all honesty and integrity leave every one to retain his own, in order that we may live in peace and die in the possession of a good conscience, undefiled by any act of injustice. Amen.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE TEARS IN HELL.

"Jesus seeing the city, he wept over it"
Luke 19, 41.

THE tears which our Lord shed were not for Himself, on account of His impending passion and death, but for the blind city of Jerusalem, which would not know the time of its visitation. These tears were shed, moreover, for every impenitent sinner who will not in time accept the graces necessary for his salvation. O, ungrateful sinner, you who despise God's mercy, Jesus weeps over you, because you will not lament now, when you might yet receive the graces that are to your peace. These tears flow for you now, because the time will come when you will weep tears in hell, tears which will avail you nothing, bring you no consolation, tears which will never cease to flow. O unfortunate sinner, consider this well; consider it to-day, and if your last spark of faith has not been extinguished, you will cease to live as you have done, and

in tears of penance you will seek salvation while yet there is time.

The pains of all tears which flow during life are mitigated by hope. Even the most miserable of all the unfortunate has hope that his condition will not last always, but in course of time, it must change. And should there be no alleviation for time, then, at least, death will free him. But how different with the damned in hell, where there is no hope! In hell there shall be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" says our Lord. Weeping caused by the fearful dungeon in which they are incarcerated, shrouded in terrible darkness which is lighted only by the eternal flames ignited by the justice of God for the punishment of the sinner. Weeping caused by the flames torturing body and soul without ever consuming them. Weeping caused by the loathing companionship of the damned of all ages, all nations, and of legions of demons. Weeping caused by the loss of God, the Infinite God, for whom the damned have an insatiable longing notwithstanding their hatred of Him. Weeping caused by the loss of Heaven, for which

they have a yearning desire, although they know that this desire can never be realized. Weeping caused by the fact that they lost Heaven through their own fault. Weeping because they now see how easily they could have gained Heaven if they had heeded the many warnings and admonitions of God's infinite, merciful love. Oh, bitter scalding tears! But now they are of no avail. If the damned could hope and with this hope wash away the mark of Cain from their soul, moderate the fearful flames, mitigate the excruciating pains, and be reconciled to God, they would cheerfully weep these tears; but all hope has vanished. They will never gain Heaven which they have lost, never pay a farthing of their debt, never quench even a spark of the devouring flames, were they to shed an ocean of tears.

Dante, the great Catholic poet of the Middle Ages, graphically expresses this truth by placing the following inscription on the gates of the infernal regions: Ye who enter here, leave all hope behind. Yes, all weeping and lamenting is of no avail. Their excruciating pains goad them into

raging despair, into diabolical hatred, they gnash their teeth against God, against themselves, and against their cursed companions. Ah, if we seriously consider the terrors of hell which are immeasurably great, without hope or consolation and, above all, without end, then we can comprehend the words of St. Chrysostom: If we do not weep now, we must weep hereafter in hell without hope, whereas here, we may do so for our salvation.

O all you who fear the justice of God and who desire to save your soul, think often and seriously of the tears that flow incessantly and without hope in hell. You especially, who are separated from God by mortal sin, who are walking rapidly towards eternity whilst you are defiling your immortal soul by impenitence, think of the tears which the Eternal Truth announces by the mouth of the evangelist: "Woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep." Luke 6, 25. Think of this eternal weeping, you, deluded children of the world, who now laugh in the possession of your unjust gains; think of it, you drunkards, who in your intemperance despise God and wring

tears of grief from your family. Think of it, you voluptuary and corruptor of innocence, who by your impious language and impure raileries scandalize and corrupt youthful souls. Think of it, you vile sensualist, who by a vice which should not even be named among Christians, degrade yourself below the level of the beast. Think of it, you merely nominal Christians, to whom it is too burdensome to assist at Mass on Sunday or too difficult to abstain from meat on Friday, the day on which is commemorated the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Think of it, you members of associations who revile religion, slander the Church and scoff at the pope, the vicegerent of Christ. O sinner, to whatever class you belong, reflect seriously on the pains of hell and on the tears shed in that infernal abode, and no longer turn a deaf ear to the voice of grace by which God calls you to penance. Descend now in spirit into the abyss of hell, so that after death you will not descend in reality.

Seven times our Lord mentions the tears that flow in hell, in order that our voluntary tears of penance may prevent the useless

tears in hell. St. Bernard, meditating on the tears in hell, exclaimed: Who will give water to my eyes that weeping I may prevent the eternal tears. Yes, my dear Christians, weep now over your sins, that you need not weep over them eternally. Here the tears will purify, hereafter they will increase despair. Here they will end in joy, as our Lord consolingly says: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Matt. 5, 5.

I shall conclude, my dear Christians, with the earnest admonition: Weep over your sins and mourn over your past offenses, in order that you will not be compelled to weep eternally in hell, but that you will rejoice and be comforted forever in Heaven. Amen.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE PUBLICAN AND ON PENANCE.

"I say to you this man went down into his house justified rather than the other." Luke 18, 14.

"O GOD, be merciful to me a sinner." Thus, in deep contrition the poor publican sighed. It is true, he was a great sinner, he had often grievously offended God, but he did not like the proud pharisee, that is, close his eyes to his own fault, but acknowledged with the royal psalmist: "I know my iniquity, (O God) and my sin is always before me." Ps. 50, 4. But what did our Lord say of him? "I say to you, this man went down to his house justified." So precious in the sight of God was the affliction of his spirit that his contrite and humbled heart was not despised, but merited for him the remission of his sins, and the grace of justification.

We also shall merit this same blessing when we leave the path of sin, return to God and with the humility and contrition

of the publican seek God's mercy and forgiveness in the sacrament of penance. For this purpose our kind and merciful Lord instituted this salutary sacrament, that our soul, stained with the filth of sin, may again be washed in His Precious Blood, clothed with the wedding garment of innocence, adorned with sanctifying grace and, made beloved children of God and heirs of Heaven. Oh, let us thank God for this inestimable token of His goodness and mercy towards us, and let us never forget what God has done for us, and is still willing to do. The angels fell, they sinned but once, and immediately they were cast into hell by the thunderbolt of divine wrath. We, human creatures, sin not once, but alas, innumerable times, and through the merits of the Precious Blood of His Divine Son, the heavenly Father is merciful and not only heals the wounds of our souls in the sacrament of penance, but also gives us a home in Heaven. Let us therefore, with grateful hearts, often have recourse to this heavenly means of purification especially when we are so unfortunate as to fall into mortal sin.

How would you act my Christian friend, if a poisonous thorn entered your hand? Would you wait until the following day before extracting it? By no means, you would, if possible, remove it immediately, lest the poison might penetrate. How do you act if you are severly injured? Do you wait for days before binding the wound? No, for you might bleed to death. But, my dear Christians, if grievous sin has not merely wounded your soul, but has in reality inflicted death, produced separation from God and placed you in the greatest danger of eternal punishment, what is your manner of acting? You continue to live in your dangerous state careless and indifferent; you allow weeks and months, yea, sometimes even years to pass before presenting yourself to the spiritual physician to have your soul cleansed from all sin and once more restored to the friendship of God.

St. Thomas Aquinas often said that it was beyond his comprehension how any Christian in the state of mortal sin could, for a moment, be cheerful and happy. The saint was right, because a Christian who

lives happily and contented whilst in enmity with God, must have little reason and less faith. For who can protect himself even for a moment against sudden death! Does not our Lord frequently warn us in the gospel that death will come, like a thief in the night, at an hour when we least expect him? Is it not a matter of daily experience that many die suddenly, the one struck by apoplexy the other, by a bullet, again others meet with their death by explosions and accidents too numerous to mention. And you, O sinner, are well aware that the same can happen to you at any moment, and yet you are so indifferent and ease your mind with the frail hope that such will not likely happen to you! You know that hell burns beneath your feet and that the angel of death can, at any moment, cast you into its eternal flames, and yet you are contented to live unreconciled to God in the greatest danger of being eternally damned? Unhappy mortal, whom do you expect to compassionate you, if through a sudden death the waves of eternal perdition close above your head, if you have no pity for

yourself? Oh, take warning in time, God's grace calls you to repentance. Reconcile yourself to God at this moment by an act of perfect contrition combined with the firm resolution of having recourse to the sacrament of penance at the first opportunity, when, like the publican in the gospel of to-day you can leave the temple in the peace of God. The sacrament of penance, however, is not only instituted for the sinner who is in the state of mortal sin, but also for the just, that he may not fall. Every venial sin you commit weakens your soul and inclines it more and more to mortal sin, hence go to confession frequently, in order to regain your spiritual strength, that you may not in your weakness fall mortally. The dust of habitual imperfections falls daily on your soul, marring the brightness of grace, and yet you know that every stain must be removed by the painful fire of purgatory before the soul can in spotless purity, enter Heaven. Frequently cleanse your soul from every spot and blemish in the sacrament of penance, that it may always be bright and untarnished and beautified

more and more by each confession, so that if our Lord should call you suddenly you will be ready and adorned with the wedding garment of sanctifying grace which entitles you to an heirship in Heaven. Amen.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON SPIRITUAL DEAFNESS.

"Ephpheta which is, be thou opened."
Marc. 7, 34.

"EPHPHETA, that is, be thou opened, our Lord said when He performed the miracle of loosening the tongue of the dumb, and opening his ears, thus giving him speech and hearing. The same words have also been pronounced over us when the priest, in imitation of our Divine Saviour, in the sacrament of baptism touched our ears with spittle and said: Ephpheta, quod est adaperire, that is, Ephpheta, which is, be thou opened. Yes, be thou opened, O ear of man, in order to hear God's holy words, that you may understand them, keep them

in your heart and obey them every day of your life.

Beloved Christians, the priest spoke these words when he baptized you, but has his prayer been also effectual? Did our Lord see you among His faithful disciples, when He said: "Blessed are they who hear the word of God" Luke 11, 28, "and who in a good and very good heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience." Luke 8, 15. Or did the Holy Ghost refer to you also, when by the mouth of the prophet Isaias, He said: "Who is blind but my servant, or deaf but he to whom I have sent my messengers." Isaias 42, 19. Alas, to how many hearers of the word of God are not these words applicable! Can we count the number of worldlings who for hours will patiently listen to the most frivolous talk, but who will not listen to the word of God for one half hour, who can enjoy scurrilous lectures, but have as great a repugnance to the heavenly food of the soul, as the invalid to the food for the body. Can we count the number, who intentionally neglect to hear the sermon on

Sunday, who even leave the church when, during the holy sacrifice of mass God's truths are dispensed to the faithful, because they are unwilling to listen to the words of eternal life. Can we enumerate all who have an aversion of hearing anything that pertains to God and to the salvation of their own soul? To what class do these indifferent hearers belong? To those who are of God, or of whom? Hearken to what our Lord says: "He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not because you are not of God." John 8, 47. No, such despisers of God's word are not of God nor will they come to God; their end is eternal destruction.

Again, there are many Christians who hear the word of God, but it does not produce in their hearts any fruit of eternal life. They listen to the sermon without attention, without due respect and without an earnest desire of hearing that which is beneficial for their soul. Or if the instruction, like the good seed, was received in their hearts, they permit the devil, the world and passion to pluck it out, and will not permit it to grow

and fructify. The most serious truths may be propounded, they pay no attention and act as if God's truths were announced for strangers but not for them. They may be repeatedly exhorted to do penance and amend their life, but they will produce at most only weak intentions, that are forgotten before they leave the church. Thus they hear sermons Sunday after Sunday from the beginning to the end of the year, and yet remain the same blasphemers, drunkards, spendthrifts and dissolute violators of every divine and human law.

What a disgraceful contempt of God's holy word! What a fearful responsibility for so many graces received and so shamefully abused. What can touch the sinner's heart if the word of God is ineffectual? What can open his eyes and show him the terrible abyss before which he stands, if divine truth no longer has power to enlighten him, correct and convert him! As long as man is susceptible of the word of God, Heaven is still open for him, even if he had lost it a thousand times by falling into mortal sin. If, however, the sinner has become deaf

to the voice of God announced in His holy gospel, there is no salvation for him, for he will not hear until the terrible judgment will be given: "Depart from Me, you cursed into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. 25, 41.

Behold, you despiser of God's word, this will be your eternal lot unless you comply with the words spoken over you in the sacrament of baptism Ephpheta, be thou opened. Cast yourself, like the deaf and dumb man in this day's gospel, at the feet of your divine Saviour and beg of Him most fervently that He cure you of your spiritual deafness, open your ears that they hear the word of God and that it sink deep into your heart and bring forth fruit in patience. Say with the prophet Samuel: "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." I. Kings 3, 10. But the faithful servant does not only hear the commands of his master, he also complies with them. Yes, O sinner, thus speak and act. We will open our ears and our hearts to the voice of grace, to God's holy word. We will earnestly desire to hear it that we may know God better, serve Him

more faithfully, love Him more truly and thus requite His infinite love. We will receive every word that comes from the mouth of God as food for our souls, and as faithful disciples of our Lord preserve this word in a good heart, so that it may bring forth abundant fruits of virtues and graces for life everlasting. Amen.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD AND OF OUR NEIGHBOR.

"Master what must I do to possess eternal life." Luke 10, 25.

THESE words, my dear brethren, were addressed to our Lord by a certain lawyer, and for us what question could be of greater importance? What must we do to possess eternal life? If we ask our Divine Saviour this question not to tempt Him, but to receive the words of life everlasting, He will also answer us: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with

thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind and thy neighbor as thyself." Luke 10, 27. Listen therefore, O Christian soul, and imprint it deeply on your mind. To love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself, this is the sublime commandment on which the eternal happiness depends. This is, according to the declaration of our Lord, not only the first and greatest commandment, but is also the one wherein the laws of Moses and the prophets, that is all other laws given by God, are included. It is impossible to love God above all things and at the same time to transgress any of the other commandments. Love of God and sin are contradictory terms, which in their very nature exclude each other.

But, alas, there are innumerable Christians who seem not to understand this truth. They become indignant if a child declares he loves his parents and yet offends them daily by his disobedience. They call such conduct lying and hypocritical. Nevertheless, they imitate this child, praying: O God, I love you above all things and at the

same time offending Him continually by committing sins, they still have the audacity to call such conduct loving God. My dear Christians, be not deceived, such a love of the lips will not be accepted by God; the gospel does not inculcate this, on the contrary, St. Paul tells us: "Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. 13, 10 that is, it consists in fulfilling God's commandments. Our Lord says: "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." John 14, 21, and the apostle St. John says: "For this is the charity (that is the love) of God, that we keep His commandments." I. John 5, 3. Now that which we are taught in these solemn words of Holy Scripture concerning the love of God, the same is said when referring to the love of our neighbor. It must not manifest itself in words only, but also in deeds, and by the deeds, the sincerity of our love will be judged. Thus St. John, the apostle of love, writes: "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of

God abide in him." I. John 3, 17. The apostle then continues: "My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." 3, 18. And again, he says: "He that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not." 4, 20. How beautiful also are not the words of St. Paul which teach that the love of our neighbor must show itself not in words alone, but in actions. "Charity is patient, is kind, charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth, beareth all things and endureth all things." I. Cor. 13, 4–7. But why quote the words of the apostles to teach you in what true love of our neighbor consists, when our Lord Himself has taught us this in the beautiful parable narrated in the gospel for this Sunday. The Jewish priest and the Levite had no true love for their neighbor. They may have had some compassion for the poor traveller wounded unto death, they may, perhaps have spoken words of conso-

lation, but they did nothing to alleviate his sufferings. The Samaritan, however, not only felt compassion for the poor sufferer and expressed it in words, but he also did everything in his power to assist him in his great need and misfortune, and hence our Divine Saviour said: "Go, and do thou in like manner."

Yes, my dear Christians, go and do in like manner, for these words were addressed to all "Go, and do thou in like manner" for this is obeying the greatest law of our holy religion, in whose fulfillment God will recognize His own. Go, and love God by act, conscientiously keeping His laws and carefully avoiding every transgression of the law. Go, and love God by preserving your heart pure and spotless. Go, and love God by performing all the duties of your state of life, and prove your love by perseverance in all those actions. Go, furthermore, and love your neighbor in deeds, by wishing him everything that is beneficial for body and soul. Go, and love your neighbor by speaking and thinking well of him, by defending his slandered virtue and

innocence. Go, and love your neighbor by practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, in one word, by assisting him in all his necessities of body and soul. See, my dear Christians, in this consists the fulfillment of the commandment of God's love. This is what will make you a child of God, a favorite of the angels, and of all men of good will. This is the key which at the hour of death will open for you the gates of the eternal Paradise and which will make you worthy to love God, the greatest and Infinite Good; to possess Him and to partake of His glory forever. Amen.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON FREQUENTING THE SACRAMENTS.

"Go show yourself to the priests."
Luke 17, 4.

IF leprosy of the body is a sad picture of the still more deplorable leprosy of the soul, namely of sin, then the admonition of our Lord to the cured lepers "Go show

yourselves to the priests" is also addressed to us, and signifies nothing less than: Go, confess your sins; go, show yourself to the priest in the tribunal of penance; wash your soul and cleanse it from all stains. Yes, my dear Christians, go to confession, not only once a year, but frequently, and if you always make a worthy confession, I promise you that you will lead a holy life, die a happy death, and after death, enjoy eternal happiness in Heaven.

All those who try to lead a good and holy life, daily experience what the pious Job expressed so well in these few words: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare." Job 7,1. Yes, life is truly a continued warfare against three great powers, the flesh, the world and the devil. We are in the midst of the battle, and alas, only too easily do we succumb to our frailty and weakness. Many are fatally wounded by the mortal sins which they commit and even the most valiant soldiers feel their weakness when by the commission of venial sin the beautiful garment of grace is tarnished. What, then, my dear brethren, can be more beneficial than the frequent

cleansing of the soul from these stains, what more necessary than the speedy application of the remedies to the wounds, what wiser than the frequent reception of the spiritual strength of the soul, if we do not wish to incur the danger of suffering defeat in this spiritual warfare and thus losing our eternal salvation. Our Divine Leader, under whose banner we are fighting, knew so well our infirmities and our needs that He instituted His Holy Church, an asylum wherein the soul can be purified, strengthened and healed. The soul finds there a laver wherein to cleanse itself from the stains with which it has become defiled, and a banquet at which it finds the means of strength when it has become weak. You all know this laver, it is the sacrament of penance, you all know this banquet, it is Holy Communion. During our earthly pilgrimage, these sacraments are always within our reach, and hence we should make frequent use of them, that our soul may remain pure and strong to battle for, and to obtain Heaven.

To confine the reception of these sacraments to the performance of the Easter duty

would be to do only what would be absolutely necessary to remain within the pale of the Church, but this would scarcely suffice to obtain Heaven. For temptations, in general, are so great, the occurrence so frequent, that one will be easily overcome unless frequently assisted, encouraged and strengthened. An occasion presents itself, a violent temptation comes, the Christian falls,—falls again, grows weaker in grace and strength of resistance, his falls occur more frequently, and thus a sin becomes a habit, which becomes more powerful the longer one remains away from the sacrament of penance. When a sin has once become habitual, the only remedy is frequent, good confession. Conscience must be frequently roused, the fear of God repeatedly instilled, the will often fortified and new courage infused into the drooping spirit. The hammer must be wielded often to break the chains, the healing waters of grace must be often applied to cool the fiery passions. Where can this be more effectually done than in the sacrament of penance, where our Lord, like the true physician of the soul, knowing

all our ailments and the wounds of our soul, heals them with the balm of sacramental grace.

My dear brethren, if you earnestly resolve to approach the tribunal of penance regularly and frequently, if you make it an infallible rule to go to confession at the first opportunity after having been so unfortunate as to fall into mortal sin, how different will not be the condition of your soul! The evil habits will soon be overcome and your bad inclinations will gradually disappear. You will soon became strong in good, take pleasure in the practice of virtue, in fine, you will become, as it were, a different person, a faithful, valiant disciple of our Lord.

We must also remember, my dear brethren, that the sacrament of penance has been instituted not only to cleanse the soul, but to preserve it from sin. By the reception of the sacramental grace, the light of faith shines brighter, the fire of divine love is more enkindled, the will inclined again to good, new courage infused into the soul enabling it to persevere in the path of virtue. Consider also the inestimable benefits you

receive in Holy Communion, where you possess the Source of all divine graces, and you will understand how beneficial the frequent reception of these sacraments is for your spiritual welfare. One grace will follow another in a continued chain, and the last link will be the grace of a happy death which will bring you to your eternal home. Amen.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE VALUE OF THE SOUL.

"Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."
Matt. 6, 33.

WHAT a grand, and sublime holy work is not the salvation of souls! On nearly every page of the gospel we find our Lord speaking of it either in plain words or in figures and parables. In the gospel of this Sunday He again mentions this, our most important work, saying: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His

justice and all these things shall be added unto you."

Indeed, my dear Christians, if we would comprehend how precious our soul is in the sight of God, we would, like the saints value it above all other things, and would never permit it to perish by a life of carelessness and indifference. What is the value of a soul in the sight of Heaven? Is it as valuable as a kingdom or an empire? More. As all the gold, silver and precious stones? More. One soul is more precious than the whole universe.

To convince you of this, I need only remind you that the soul is an image and a likeness of God; a being which came from Heaven and was created for Heaven. I could remind you that God, moreover, has given His beloved angels, who stand before His throne adoring His Infinite Majesty, charge over the souls to guard them from evil and to protect them against the snares of Satan. I could direct your thoughts to the grief and the bitter tears the Church weeps when a soul is seduced from the path of virtue, and, the victorious cry of hell when a soul goes to perdition.

These things, however, we shall not to-day contemplate, I shall lead you to Mt. Calvary to the cross of our dying Redeemer. There you will see that God so highly prized your soul that to save it, He shed His own Precious Blood. In order to create a soul, God but "breathed into his face the breath of life and man became a living soul" Gen. 2, 7, but to save that soul, the Saviour had to give His own life. Yes, my dear Christians, ascend Mt. Calvary and behold your God and Redeemer hanging on the cross between heaven and earth. Do you see the nails in His hands and feet? Do you see the crown of thorns on His head? Do you see how cruelly His arms are stretched? Do you see the gaping wounds, the torn body, the flowing blood? Do you see the pallid face in the agony of death? Then ask your Lord and Master: What, O sweetest Jesus, has caused this bitter passion, what caused these cruel torments, this agony of death? And the Crucified Saviour will bow His head and answer: This O soul, I have suffered for you. To save you I descended from Heaven into this valley of tears, labored thirty-three

years, and then carried this cross, was nailed to it and there shed the last drop of My blood. "Anima tanti vales, So precious thou art? O soul," St. Augustine.

My dear Christians, can you listen to your Saviour speaking thus from the cross and still remain callous to the voice of grace? "Have pity on your own soul." Eccli.30,24, says the preacher. Yes, have pity on your own soul which is created to live eternally. "For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul?" Matt. 16, 26. How quickly time flies, how soon will your life be finished! How soon the hour will come, the dreadful hour of judgment. Then you will not be questioned: How rich were you? How many acres of land did you possess? What honorable position did you occupy? On the contrary, you will be asked: How have you lived, what have you done to save your soul? And the answer to these questions will decide whether Heaven or hell, eternal beatitude or eternal damnation will be your portion. If you die as a child of God, you may indeed be compelled to remain for a time in

purgatory to complete your penance, but your soul is saved, and you have secured Heaven as your eternal inheritance. If however, you appear without the wedding garment of sanctifying grace, as an enemy of God, in the state of mortal sin, your soul is lost forever, it is destined to burn in the fearful flames of hell for all eternity. Then you may wring your hands in anguish and despair, it will avail you nothing. Then you may weep floods of tears, they will never quench the flames, which you have kindled by your indifference. Your soul is lost — lost through your fault, — through your own fault—through your own grievous fault — lost without hope, without mercy, lost forever.

He who loses his soul, loses all. During life, he could profit by the infinite merits of the Precious Blood of our Lord. He had the sacraments, he had so many graces. Now he has nothing. All is lost.

It is true, he wished to be saved, he spoke repeatedly of Heaven, he often resolved to be converted. But of what avail? He neglected the time of grace, and now all is lost.

He often recommended himself to the prayers of pious persons or friends, even in the last sickness he wished to die a Christian, a Catholic, but he neglected the time of repentance and of what avail are now all these pious thoughts? He lost his soul, and with it, all. Oh, terrible, eternal, irremediable loss!

Dearly beloved Christians, there is still time to escape so terrible a lot. Let us consider well the important truth which our Lord teaches us in the gospel of this day. "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God." Let us attend to the salvation of our soul while there is yet time. Live always as true children of God, in the state of grace and flee from sin. Repeat daily: That I must die is most certain, but I know not when, how, nor where, but this I do know, if I die in the state of mortal sin, my soul will be lost, damned forever; if I die in the state of grace, I am saved for life eternal. Amen.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON SPIRITUAL DEATH.

"Behold, a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother."
Luke 7, 12.

A YOUNG man, the gospel relates, was carried to the grave. Shortly before, he was the picture of health and youthful vigor, the support of his mother, but now he is silent and cold, the eyes are sunken, the lips closed; the face is pale, the body without motion; death has claimed him as a victim. A sad sight, indeed, but a sadder spectacle it is to see the soul of so many young people resemble the body of the young man in the gospel; although corporally living, yet they are spiritually dead, and to them may be applied the words of the Apocalypse: "Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead." A few years ago they were innocent, promising children, and on the day of their first Holy Communion, they promised undying love

and fidelity to their dear Lord. They might have been compared to blooming young trees promising to bear most delicious fruits. But now they are grown, and alas, what must we say of them? They are spiritually dead, their soul is dead to God and life everlasting. They tore from their heart the crown of innocence, they cast away the pearl of piety, and alas, perhaps, even that of faith; they now walk far from God on the road to perdition, a source of the deepest grief to their parents, and of scandal to the community. Oh, how much more deserving of pity are not these spiritually dead young men, than the one mentioned in the gospel! How much better for them would it have been had death claimed them in their innocence, before the poison of sin destroyed their soul! How much better it would have been for them had their bodies been brought to the grave, instead of Satan bringing their innocence and their fear of God to destruction!

Let us also consider the weeping mother, who so sorrowfully follows the corpse of her only son. He was her only support, the

staff of her life and now she has lost him, and with him, all hopes of a cheerful old age. There are many parents who can speak of a similar grief, for how many have not been compelled to follow the remains of dearly beloved children whom death snatched away in the bloom of their youth! Their grief, no doubt, was great, but nothing compared to what Christian parents must, or should feel when they mourn the spiritual death of their children; if they see that a child which they brought up in the fear of God, has fallen a victim of temptation, fallen away from God and is now hastening to perdition.

Yet, how immeasurably greater will not be the grief, if parents must admit that they are the cause of their children's destruction! Perhaps, through blind love for them they have been too indulgent, did not correct their faults or punish them when necessary, perhaps, they have not been sufficiently watchful but permitted them to join in all kinds of dangerous amusements, or they may have allowed them to enter services for the sake of a few dollars, regardless of the associations they would meet. Poor parents,

you have indeed cause to weep, but despair not, rather look up with confidence to Him who is the mighty helper in every need.

The procession moved outside the gates of the city. Bowed down with grief, the weeping mother followed. Behold, the mournful cortege is quickly changed into a rapturous throng. The Saviour spoke to the mother "Weep not" to the son "Young man, I say to thee arise", and obedient to the Master's voice "he that was dead sat up and joyfully the mother clasped him to her bosom." Thus, the omnipotent Consoler of the sorrowful changed the tears of woe into those of joy. The same God is still living, possessing the same omnipotence, and can raise not only the corporally dead, but also the spiritually dead to life. Who could count the number of souls dead to God whom by His omnipotent voice of grace He has raised from a long and fearful death of sin, to a new life of grace, and who now, in the midst of the holy penitents, stand before the throne of God, chanting the joyful, eternal Alleluia. May you, my young friends, who are now lying enclosed

in the tomb of sin, also hear the selfsame words; may your hard heart be so pierced that you will hear the loving voice of Jesus addressing you: Young man, young maiden, I say to thee arise. Arise from the death-torpor of indifference, of pride and vanity, and of other vices. Arise from the spiritual death of sin. Arise, for, perhaps, actual death may overtake you suddenly and find you unprepared; then it will be too late. The spiritual death will change into eternal death, the death of hell. Arise therefore now, and save your soul when salvation is still within your reach.

And you, poor parents, who must lament over the death of the soul of your child, learn to-day to whom you must apply, that your child may rise from death and again receive the life of sanctifying grace. Appeal to the Good Shepherd that He will seek the lost sheep, tell your grief to the Master and pray without intermission and with confidence for your poor child. Follow the example of St. Monica who did not desist from praying until she obtained the conversion of her son, who afterwards became the

great St. Augustine. Pray earnestly, perseveringly and with confidence, and you will be rewarded. Your prayers will be heard and you will be able to exclaim: This, my son, this, my daughter was lost, but now he or she is found; the soul was dead, but now it has come to life again. Amen.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE OBSERVANCE OF SUNDAY.

> "Keep you My Sabbath, for it is holy unto you; he that shall profane it, shall be put to death; he that shall do any work in it, his soul shall perish out of the midst of his people." Exod. 31, 14.

THE Pharisees permitted the saving of an ass or an ox on the Sabbath day, but considered the healing of the dropsical man a crime. Such reasoning must be considered either as the height of absurdity or clear hypocrisy, and yet their actions are far less culpable than the contempt with which so many Christians of the present day treat the observance of the Sunday.

The Sunday is the day of the Lord, but, alas, many Christians make it a day of the devil, by spending their time in frivolity and sinfulness. Sunday is a day on which we should advance nearer to Heaven, but unfortunately, it is one on which many proceed to eternal perdition. The day of the Lord has become one of harvest for the devil. A terrible truth of which you will be convinced if you consider what commandments God has given us, what duties He has imposed upon us through His Holy Church, and how these obligations are discharged.

Amidst the rolling of thunder and the flashing of lightning, God spoke on Mt. Sinai: "Six days shalt thou labor and shalt do all thy works, but on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son nor thy daughter, nor thy man servant nor thy maid servant, nor thy beast nor the stranger that is within thy gates." Exod. 20, 9. This is the solemn commandment which the Lord of Heaven and earth has given. In the Old Law, the seventh day of the week was the Lord's day; in the New Law it is Sunday,

the first day. It was changed in memory of our Lord's resurrection from the dead, and, of the descent of the Holy Ghost. But by changing the day from the last to the first of the week, the law of keeping it holy was not changed, but remains in force.

But where do we find obedience to the divine mandate? Who could count the Christians who violate the sanctity of the Sunday, not from necessity nor from any legitimate cause, but from sinful indifference to the command of God. There are many, who, as it were in contempt of this commandment, make the Sunday a day of work and debauchery and then keep the day following to rest from the work they have done for Satan and hell. Do not be surprised that for them Sunday is a day of harvest for the devil.

This becomes more apparent if you consider the duty which the Church imposes upon us this day and the manner in which this obligation is observed. The Church commands us to hear Mass on all Sundays and holy days of obligation, and our Lord ratifies this precept of the Church by saying:

"He that heareth you (My Church) heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me." Luke 10, 16, and again: "If (thy brother) will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican." Matt. 18, 17. How many such heathen and publicans does not each Sunday present to the All-seeing eye of God! These blind unfortunates cannot devote one day to the salvation of their soul; not one hour to the service of God by assisting at the most sacred of all mysteries, the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and fulfilling an obligation that binds them under pain of mortal sin. They would rather lose their soul, than give the honor due to God, edify their neighbor and pray for the necessary graces. Add to these the number who go to Church, but who come late, leave during Mass or who by their indifference or scandalous behavior in the sanctuary of the Lord, heap grievous sins on their conscience. Consider these sad truths and you will understand why hell rejoices at the approach of Sunday.

The performance of servile work and even the neglect of Mass are not the greatest

crimes committed. The sanctity of the Lord's day is still further outraged by innumerable dissipations, intemperate drinking, sinful plays, and excesses of all kinds. It seems as if during the week some had no time to offend God and barter their soul to the devil, and that they must make up in a hundredfold manner for lost time on Sunday. This is the principal day on which are committed most of the crimes that find their conclusion in the jails or on the gallows. Sunday is the day for forming licentious acquaintances, of mingling with dangerous companions, and of engaging in sinful amusements. All these are occasions where innocence is destroyed, and body and soul are given over to ruin and destruction. Sunday is the day of riotous drunkeness, of consequent quarrels, of cursing and blaspheming. Sunday is the day of tears for so many wives and children, whose husbands and fathers squander the last penny, in consequence of which they must hunger during the rest of the week. Sunday is the day on which pride and vanity reign, where slander finds most time to spread its venomous lies;

Sunday is the day which is spent in reading those detestable romances that undermine faith and morality.

But enough of this. You will be convinced without further enumeration, that more sins and crimes are committed on this day than during the other six days. What a terrible truth, and yet Sunday is the day of the Lord. Must not sorrow fill the heart of every Christian who loves God and sees this day so fearfully outraged? Let us be determined not to swell this sinful throng, that the day of judgment may not find us among the number of those who profaned the Lord's day. Let us keep holy the Sunday by glorifying God and attending to the salvation of our soul. No unnecessary servile work shall desecrate it; no sinful dissipation sully our conscience. On this day let us especially honor God by our fervent prayers, by faithful and pious attendance at the Holy Sacrifice, and by frequenting the sacraments. If we faithfully perform this, our first and most important duty, then we may also enjoy innocent pleasures and recreations. But all our amusements must be of such a

nature that our Guardian Angel may rejoice with us and that on our death-bed these amusements may not be the cause of our sorrow. Amen.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON FALSE LOVE OF GOD.

"He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." John 14, 21.

THERE is no word, the signification of which is so much misused as the word love. Unfortunately, there are too many sad instances to prove this assertion. No one, however, suffers so much from the abuse of this word as Almighty God. Thousands of Christians pray every morning and evening: O my God, I love You above all things. This prayer for many is mostly one of the lips; the heart knows nothing of it. The manner in which these Christians live shows nothing to verify it. Instead of acts of love, their life shows only those of sin. Their unchristian manner of living

evinces naught but acts of ingratitude, disobedience and contempt towards God. What would you think of a child who daily made protestations of love to its parents and, at the same time, caused them bitter tears on account of its ingratitude, obstinacy and disregard to all their wishes and commands? Would you call this love? Would you not rather deem it hypocrisy? Precisely the same may be said of those Christians, who in prayer pretend to love God, but instead of showing this love by acts of gratitude, exhibit their contempt of Him, by the manner in which they deliberately transgress His commandments. Such Christians deceive themselves and are hypocrites in the sight of Heaven. Their love cannot be compared to refined gold, but rather to dross. Such love will not open Heaven, but rather increase their punishment, for "he that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me," says our Lord, and St. John, the apostle of love, says: "This is the charity of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not heavy." I. John 5, 3.

St. Paul also explains the essence of the love of God in these words: "Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law," (Rom. 13, 10.) that is, of the commandments.

Those who love God truly and sincerely are resolved never to offend Him by any deliberate sin, and if they should have been so unfortunate as to offend Him grievously, they know no greater sorrow than to have lost God; they have no greater desire than to be reconciled to Him, and once more to be received as His children. If a mother, by the hand of death, loses her only child, what grief and lamentation! If the husbandman, by a hailstorm, loses his whole crop, and sees all the fruit of his labor, — that which he has gained by the sweat of his brow, the hope of the coming year,—dashed to pieces in a short time; if one sees all his possessions destroyed in a few hours by the devouring element, what sorrow and wringing of hands! But you, my dear Christians, if by mortal sin you have lost God, and with God, everything that makes you happy for time and eternity, are you as much grieved as the poor mother, as sorrowful as the

husbandman, as sad as the laborer? Alas, no! You laugh and are joyful, and the loss of the Infinite Good causes you neither distress nor grief. If you had lost anything valuable, you would not wait until the coming morrow, you would immediately seek it with diligence. But, it is God whom you have lost! Think of it, O Christian, God,— your all, — without whom there is nothing but eternal pain. Do you care? Are you anxious to conciliate God? Oh no; He can wait for weeks and months, perhaps, until the next Easter season before you are restored to His friendship by penance and true contrition. Do you call this loving God above all things? Oh no, this is termed slighting God, but not loving Him.

Again, those who love God truly, do not merely avoid offending Him mortally or grieve if they have done so, but they are pained to see others offer insults to His Infinite Goodness. This, for instance, was the case with David who loved God sincerely. Malignantly pursued by Saul, insulted by Semei, persecuted by his own son Absolom, he bore all with patience although grievously

afflicted at heart. But seeing the shameful outrages of the impenitent sinner, he mournfully exclaims: "A fainting hath taken hold of me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law." Ps. 118, 53. Tell me, my dear Christians, are these your sentiments? Do you feel sorrowful, like David, when you see how grievously God is daily offended? The majority of Christians are not, provided they are not thereby wronged. A poor sick laborer is immediately sent away to the hospital lest his fellow-laborers be infected with the contagious disease. A wicked laborer, however, is retained, regardless of the danger of contaminating by his wickedness, regardless of his daily transgressions against God. Self-interest alone is consulted and he is kept, because he performs his work well, does the will of his master who is not concerned at the offense given to God. If your child is dangerously sick, what anxiety and grief, but if he associates with wicked persons, exposes himself to the risk of losing his innocence, of being eternally lost, what do you and the majority of parents care? You remain cold and indifferent. If

your good name is attacked, how angry you become, but if God is blasphemed in your presence, you listen to it quietly. Is this loving God with your whole heart and soul?

Alas, brethren, let us acknowledge that hitherto God was not our highest Good, our love was merely an act of the lips, not of the heart. And, yet, how can we expect to be permitted to love God for all eternity, if we will not give Him our love during the short period of our mortal life. Let us, therefore, resolve to live no longer for ourselves, for our own will and the gratification of our passions, but for God alone. Through love of God, let us reject all sin, and conscientiously perform the duties of our state of life. As faithful and loving disciples of our Lord, let us live, act, and work for the greater honor and glory of God, so that we may possess Him, praise Him and love Him for all eternity. Amen.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

BLESSINGS OF AFFLICTIONS.

"For whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth, and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

Hebrew 12, 16.

THE condition of the man sick of the palsy was indeed a deplorable one. Helpless, and continually tortured by this dread disease, he deserved the compassion of his relatives and friends. Which of us, however, can secure himself against a similar fate. Faith teaches us and the daily experience of life demonstrates that this earth is a valley of tears. It is related that a friend, bowed down with grief, came to Solon, the Greek philosopher, seeking consolation. Solon took him to the roof of his house and pointing to the palaces of Athens said: How much grief and sorrow do you think is hidden under the roofs of those buildings? Look around, count the houses, and you will find that there is none which does not contain at least one person who is more

unhappy than you. If, in imagination, we would ascend a similar height and review the lives of the people, if we could see their sorrow and trials, we should soon come to the conclusion that there is no home without sorrow. We should find verified the words of Ecclesiasticus. "Great labor is created for all men, and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam, from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb, until the day of their burial into the mother of all." Eccli. 40, 1.

Whence this painful ordination of God? What is it that causes so much tribulation? Faith answers: Sin is the poisonous source from which the stream of evil issues to flood the earth. By sin, paradise was lost and it can be regained only by suffering. Yes, only by means of the cross can the evil inclinations be checked and overcome. It requires God's scourge to raise our heart, which is so attached to earth, aloft and thus save us from eternal perdition. One glance at life will convince you of this truth. When is man more apt to forget God and the end for which he is created? When do

the flames of passion rise higher in the heart? When does the lukewarm Christian with the least compunction hasten to the wide road of perdition? Does not experience daily teach us that it is when the sun of temporal success shines brightest; when no cross reminds him of the instability and vanity of all earthly things, when pleasures and honors stifle the voice of conscience?

How many, during the enjoyment of perfect health, lost all care for the salvation of their soul! Then the Lord sent them a painful and dangerous sickness. Prostrated on a bed of pain, their eyes were opened; they saw the grave looming before them and their mind was concentrated on the ocean of eternity. Then the voice of conscience called loudly to them: If at this moment you were compelled to exchange your bed with the silent tomb, would your soul be prepared to stand before the judgment-seat of God? And the soul thus aroused to the eternal truth and to the end of all things, was moved to contrition for its past offenses; with deep sorrow it looked up to the Crucified Saviour, hope was revived, the con-

verted soul again gave her heart to her heavenly Father and began a new life in the service of God.

How many others will you find whose only god is the world with all its vanities. Their heart is so attached to the world that they never think of death, judgment, Heaven or hell. Their houses, their money, their property, are the pillars on which they rely, for religion or for the eternal goods, there is no longer place in their heart. If, however, they lose their fortune, their possessions, if they see the foundations on which they relied so much crumble to nothing, if the stars of honors and positions that formerly shone so brightly vanish from their sight, if they find themselves standing alone in the darkness of misfortune, if all voices of joy are silenced, if they knock in vain at the doors of their former companions, who no longer recognize them, then their mind becomes enlightened, their thoughts turn to God who governs all things, and by penance they become once more faithful servants and good children.

Verily, afflictions are the staff which God

uses to break the flinty hearts of men. They are the trumpet by which the souls who are dead in sin and buried in the grave of negligence, are recalled to life. Afflictions are the two-edged sword, with which the Lord cuts asunder the bonds of sinful habits. They are the rungs of the ladder to gain perfection and to ascend to Heaven. Hence St. Ephraim prayed: Thy scourges, O Lord, are cut from the tree of mercy, and when they strike, it is for our benefit.

God sends afflictions, however, not only to the sinner, to convert him, but also to the just to make him more perfect. The good, like the gold placed in the crucible, must be purified from all imperfections. The wheat must first be sifted and cleansed from chaff before it is stored away. So must also the souls of the just be cleansed from imperfections before they can find a place, as good wheat, in the eternal store-house of Heaven. This sifting and cleaning takes place in the school of the cross. For here the child should practice his faith, gain strength in hope, and be inflamed with the fire of divine love. Here he should suffer his purgatory

by the practice of patience, here he should learn to make his life conformable to that of his Lord by the practice of virtues and thus merit Heaven.

Hence we see that all God-fearing souls loved the cross. The apostles joyfully suffered persecutions for the name of Jesus. The martyrs praised God amidst their terrible tortures. St. Augustine prayed: Here O Lord, burn and cut, but spare me in eternity. St. Theresa, taught in the school of sufferings, prayed daily: Lord, permit me to suffer or to die. St. Francis Xavier, the great apostle of the Indies, when overwhelmed with afflictions prayed: Lord, do not take this cross away from me, except to send me a heavier one. Thus the saints loved sufferings and afflictions and should not we try to imitate them? Do we wish to have a Heaven both in time and in eternity? No, let us first suffer with Christ and His saints, that we may be glorified with them, Let us bear our cross patiently, that we may receive the crown of eternal glory. Amen.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE SPIRITUAL WEDDING-GARMENT.

"Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding-garment?"
Matt. 22, 12.

WHO is the unfortunate guest found at the banquet without the wedding-garment? It is, as you are aware, the sinner who by grievous sin has lost the robe of sanctifying grace with which our Heavenly Father clothed his soul in the sacrament of baptism. If he die in this state he departs from this life in enmity with God, and woe to him, for then also the Eternal Judge will say: "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" Alas, what will the sinner say in justification? In the knowledge of his guilt, he must remain silent, for every word of excuse would be but a lie. Why did he live in enmity with God? Why, walk the wide road to perdition? Why, ungratefully refuse the hand of forgiveness which even on his death-bed was held out to him? Terribly, but justly,

the sentence of the infinitely equitable Judge will overcome him when he hears the dread words: "Depart from Me, you cursed, depart into the eternal fire of hell which has been prepared for the devil and his angels."

Oh fearful lot, to dwell in the eternal flames, to burn in the unextinguishable fire! Who can understand the effects of this fire! Who can describe the tortures of the flames! It is painful, indeed, to suffer from material fire! Who would for gold, hold his hands in the fire? And, yet, this fire has been created by God for man's benefit. How excruciatingly painful then must not be the fire enkindled by the wrath of God, for the sole purpose of punishing His enemies! What is our material fire in comparison with the torments of hell where "their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be extinguished." Isaias 66, 24. In these torments the damned must dwell forever. "Depart from Me, you cursed into everlasting fire." Matt. 25, 41, says our Lord, "and these (the wicked) shall go into everlasting punishment." Matt. 24, 46. St. John, the Baptist, speaking of the Messiah says that

He "will gather the wheat into His barn, but the chaff—that is the wicked — He will burn with unquenchable fire." Luke 3, 17. St. John in the Apocalypse speaking of the damned says: "He also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled with pure wine in the cup of His wrath and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone . . . and the smoke of their torments shall ascend up forever and ever, neither have they rest day nor night." Apoc. 14, 10. There, the damned will be tortured by the devils with all imaginable pain as long as God shall live, that is, forever. No tear, no sigh, no sorrow ascends from that abyss to the throne of Divine Mercy, even the drop of water from the tip of the finger which for a second might cool the tongue will be denied. Luke 16, 24.

This, impenitent sinner, is the abode with which your Saviour, your Eternal Judge, threatens you in the gospel if you continue the life you now lead. Should you not fear and tremble? Have you the temerity to advance one step on the road to eternal destruction? What, O sinner, preserves you

from hell to which you belong on account of your wickedness? Is it not alone the frail thread of life which the Almighty holds in His hands and which He can, by death sever at any moment? Have you the assurance of another hour? Alas, no, but of this you are aware that if at this moment, you would appear before God, deprived as you are of sanctifying grace, you would be cast into the eternal flames of hell.

O sinner, have compassion upon your own immortal soul. Save that soul as long as salvation is possible. Humbly return to your compassionate Saviour. Do you not hear how lovingly He calls you in the gospel? Do you not see how compassionately He offers you the wedding-garment of grace in the sacrament of penance? Why do you reject it, why not accept it? Raise your mind to Heaven, behold the banquet is prepared, so many places are filled, yours is vacant. Shall it ever remain thus? Oh, no, hesitate no longer; hasten to cast yourself at the feet of your Divine Saviour. He will embrace you lovingly and imprint on your brow the kiss of peace and forgiveness.

The angels will exult when your Saviour introduces you saying: "Rejoice, my dear angels, for this soul which was lost, has been found; this soul which I have so long sought, is again Mine."

My dear brethren, let the word of God be spoken not to the sinner alone, let us open our ears to it and according to the admonition of St. Paul, work out our salvation in fear and trembling. For "Man knoweth not", says Holy Scripture "whether he be worthy of love or hatred." Eccles. 9, 1. The greatest saints have trembled at the thought of hell—should we then be so careless and indifferent — rest in such confident security—we, who are no saints, but miserable sinners? Behold, in the dark recesses of a cave, you see St. Jerome lying on the ground, covered with blood and striking his breast with a stone. Why does he act thus? Tremblingly he answers: From the fear of hell, I have thus secluded myself, and I chastise my body on account of my sins. There, in the depth of the forest, you see St. Bernard in tears scourging his body. Why? "I fear", he answers, "the eternal

flames of hell, and hence I punish myself now, that hereafter I may not be punished by God."

Once, when St. Chrysostom was preaching in Constantinople, before an immense audience, he stopped suddenly and burst into tears: "My heart seems to break," he exclaimed, "at the thought of the thousands here present, perhaps only a few hundred will be saved, and I myself more than others, must tremble in fear for the salvation of my soul." At these words all knelt down uniting their tears and prayers with those of their bishop, resolving by true penance to secure Heaven.

Let us likewise in spirit cast ourselves before the throne of mercy and beg for the grace of perseverance. And you, O sinner, who by grievous sin have deprived yourself of the garment of sanctifying grace, let the tears of contrition flow and resolve, at the first opportunity, to regain this robe in the sacrament of penance. Speak to your Lord present in the tabernacle: Heaven is not yet closed for me, nor has hell received me, I can still save my soul by penance, hence

O Lord, chastise me in this world as long and as severely as thou wilt, but spare me in eternity. Amen.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE LAST SACRAMENTS.

"Lord, come down before that my son die."
John 4, 49.

AS soon as the ruler heard that Jesus had come into Galilee, he hastened to Him begging Him to come and heal his son. What sacrifices will not true love make for the beloved one who is afflicted with sickness? No time nor money is spared, the physician is immediately summoned, costly medicines and delicacies are purchased. No fatigue is felt, no contagion feared. A mother will often sit days and nights at the bedside of a dear child, love keeping off sleep from her fatigued eyes.

This sacrificing love is, indeed, beautiful and touching to behold, and is one of the most elevating features in life. If we are

equally solicitous in our love and care for the sick as was the ruler of to-day's gospel there is still another point which we can learn from his example.

As soon as he heard that the Lord was in the country, he hastened to Him to seek aid. And we, who have our Lord with His graces in the sacraments so near us, we often hesitate before calling Him through His priests. Is not our Lord most willing to become the physician of our soul? Is He not always ready to heal the wounds which have been inflicted by sin? Why then do you, O tender mother, hesitate, when your son is dangerously ill? If you love his soul, go to the priest, God's representative and say: Come before my son dies. Come, that by the reception of the sacraments, his soul may be healed and purified from all sin ere it must appear before the judgment-seat of God. Why do you linger? cannot the disease, at any moment, take an unfavorable turn? cannot death come in an instant, or may not the patient lose consciousness and thus be incapable of receiving the sacrament of penance?

If at any time confession is desirable and often most necessary, it is at the hour of death; for this confession often decides for Heaven or hell, for eternal life or eternal death. It may be that for years one has concealed sins, especially those committed in youth, or has had no contrition for them, hence all his confessions and communions were sacrilegious. All these confessions, must, as far as possible, be repeated. Faults committed in making this last confession may be eternally deplored, but can never be repaired. Would you attempt to make such a confession when death was stamped upon your countenance and you were incapable of concentrating your thoughts?

One of the greatest blessings a good confession will bring you is, that now being in the state of grace your sufferings will not be in vain, but as a child of God, you can endure your purgatory on the sick-bed by conforming to the will of God, and by bearing patiently the pains of sickness, and thus securing immeasurable merits for Heaven.

What sweet consolations does not a good confession bring to the patient in his last

hour! It changes his bed of thorns to one of roses by the peace of consience it brings, by the assurance of being a child of God, by the knowledge of being able without fear and trembling to appear before God, and by being assured of Heaven.

Such peace of mind is also most beneficial to the body, and the contentment and happiness of the soul will often effect more than all remedies in assisting nature to recover shattered health. Sometimes sickness is a design of Providence to rouse the sinner from his spiritual lethargy, and if he listens to this warning of grace, death will often delay the cutting of the thread of life.

Moreover, my dear Christians, you must also consider the beneficial effects for body and soul of the two sacraments which follow confession, namely, Holy Communion and Extreme Unction. If the woman mentioned in holy Scripture, who was afflicted for twelve years, touched only the hem of our Lord's garment and was immediately healed from her incurable disease, what blessings will not the true Body and Precious Blood of our Lord, the heavenly Physician, whom

you receive in the Sacrament of Love bring to your soul! And the apostle St. James admonishes you: "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church and let them pray over him, annointing him with oil in the name of the Lord," James 5, 14, and he further assures you that this sacrament of Extreme Unction, of which he has spoken, will restore your health if it is beneficial to your soul. "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man and the Lord shall raise him up." 5, 15.

Hence, my dear brethren, during a dangerous sickness, do not fear to receive these sacraments. They will bring you no evil, no death, on the contrary, they will procure your temporal and spiritual welfare. Follow the example of the ruler in this day's gospel, hasten to Jesus and pray: Come to me with Thy divine grace before I die. He is the assistance of the suffering, the consoler of the afflicted and the help of the dying. Have confidence in Him, for He, who during your life has been your Good Shepherd, sought you, the lost sheep, and by His grace carried you back to the fold, as it

were, on His shoulders, will certainly lead you to the eternal pasture of joy and happiness. Amen.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE LOVE OF ENEMIES.

"So also shall My heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."

Matt. 18, 35.

THIS Sunday's gospel, my dear brethren, may justly be called the gospel of the love of enemies. In the figure of the unmerciful servant, who would not condone the small debt of his fellow-servant, our Lord teaches us that unless we are willing to forgive others, we cannot hope for forgiveness from God. This same truth is inculcated in many other passages of Holy Writ, and is so emphatically declared, that to think an unforgiving Christian could enter Heaven, would be resisting the known truth, and this, you know, is a sin against

the Holy Ghost. All Christians are well aware of this, and hence their obduracy seldom goes so far as to say: I hate my enemies and I will not forgive them. But let us examine if the forgiveness which some accord to their enemy is true and sincere, and with the assistance of the gospel answer the question, What qualities must the love of our enemies have?

In the first place, the love we have for our enemies must be sincere, that is, it must come from the heart. Sincerity does not depend on words, hence, that the love we bear our neighbor, may be sincere and acceptable to God, it must spring from the heart and not be a hypocritical assertion of the lips. Again, the heart must love the enemy it has hated, by wishing him well. Should feelings of revenge and hatred arise, they must be subdued. This is often difficult and seems to surpass the powers of nature, but with the grace of God it will be easy. For nothing is impossible with God, and if we earnestly ask the grace of forgiveness it will be given us. We must, moreover, try to eradicate from the memory the

injuries received, and wish our enemy all things that we desire for ourselves and petition God to grant us. This is the signification of true love which God has pronounced through the mouth of His servant Moses: "Seek not revenge, nor be mindful of the injury of thy citizens." Lev. 19, 18.

If God commands us not to be mindful of, that is, not to remember the injuries received, how sadly do those deceive themselves, who say that they will forgive, but not forget. They endeavor to cloak their hatred by this dissembling statement, but before God it will avail them nothing. He who does not wish to forget desires to retain the injury in his heart, and such our Lord, in this day's gospel, threatens with the vengeance of His heavenly Father, for, "from your heart you must forgive every one his brother." St. Paul referring to this commandment, so beautifully says: "If any have a complaint against another, even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so you also." Col. 3, 13. Engrave these words deeply on your memory: as the Lord hath forgiven you, so do you also forgive. Now,

does God entertain anger or ill-will against the sinner whom He has pardoned? No, He no longer remembers his iniquity; He treats him as if he had never committed the crime. Thus, my dear Christians, you must act towards your enemy, thus follow God's example; you must love your enemy as if he had never injured you. Ten thousand talents He has forgiven you in the sacrament of penance, because you besought Him, and now He commands that you forgive your fellow-servant the hundred pence, which are his offenses against you, otherwise you will be delivered to Satan and his angels, the eternal torturers.

Secondly, we must not only love our enemies with our whole heart, but we must also show this love exteriorly. Formerly, before the offense, you always saluted your neighbor, your relations, conversed with them pleasantly, asked and gave advice, and I trust, included them in your prayers. Now, do you wish to omit all these signs of friendship, after having solemnly promised God to forgive and forget! Must not every one judge you to be a hypocrite and con-

clude that the old hatred is still gnawing at your heart? You may say: I will forgive my enemy, but I cannot salute him or show him a friendly countenance, for he would deride, me and say: Now he submits and confesses that he was in error. If the unrelenting spirit of your enemy is the cause of his being condemned to hell, is it possible that you desire to be his companion? Let your enemy act as he pleases, do you what God commands. Speak to him in the language of love, not once, nor seven times, but seventy-seven times, that is always; and you will soon be reconciled. You will then receive the reward for having saved a soul for Heaven.

Do not forget that the commandment of forgiving your enemy from your heart, imposes upon you the duty of showing this love by acts. For this is the touch-stone which distinguishes true love from that which is false. Formerly, you assisted your neighbor in difficulties; you must do the same now. God demands this sacrifice from you. You have, perhaps during your enmity, injured your neighbor in his goods or

reputation. Go, and repair the injury you have done; recall the calumny you have spread, for no sin can be forgiven unless, if possible, the injury is repaired. Now, my dear Christians, you know what God requires of you in this commandment of loving your enemies. You must love with all your heart, and show this by word and deed. "Be ye doers of the word (of God) and not hearers only." James 1, 22; and ever mindful of St. Paul's admonition: "Be ye kind one to another, merciful, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you in Christ." Eph. 4, 32. Amen.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON HYPOCRISY.

"Why do you tempt Me, ye hypocrites?"
Matt. 22, 18.

OUR Lord calls the Pharisees hypocrites, and, indeed, this was an appropriate name for men who had God on their lips, but, the devil in their hearts. Under the

cloak of flattering praise, they approach our Lord to ensnare Him by captious questions, that they may accuse and ruin Him. Would to God, that the generation of hypocritical pharisees were extinct, but alas, there are innumerable Christians pharisees, who, hiding their wickedness under the garb of virtue and piety, are principally engaged in injuring and ruining their neighbors. Such persons carefully guard their wicked conscience from the eyes of the world, enveloping themselves so dexterously in the clothing of sheep that they cannot easily be discovered. Hence history with its warning examples must guide us so that we may detest their evil doings.

On the first pages of Holy Scripture, we meet with an ancestor of the pharisees, namely Cain, the murderer of Abel. How tenderly he addressed his innocent brother, to persuade him to take a walk in the fields. When away from the guarding parent, how diabolically dextrous he was to wield the club and murder his brother! There are thousands that may be compared to Cain, who, although they do not kill their neigh-

bor, yet destroy his honor and mortally wound his feelings. How friendly and pleasantly they speak to their neighbor! how fluently the honied words of tenderness flow from their lips! As soon as he is out of sight, however, they fall upon his character, tearing it to shreds with their fault-finding, lying and calumny. Are these pharisees in their Christian garb any better than Cain, the fractricide?

Secondly, we find an arch-hypocrite in Herod, the murderer of the innocent children of Bethlehem. What piety he feigned when the wise men from the East came to his palace in Jerusalem, inquiring after the child whose star they had seen! What earnest desires he expressed that he also might come and adore it! At the same time, says St. Chrysostom, whilst Herod's lips were expressing such devotion, his hands were engaged in sharpening the sword with which he intended to kill the child. Would to God, there were no hypocritical Herods in Christendom, but alas, too often in our own day piety and religion are used as a cloak for wickedness. Here you find a person

always speaking on religious subjects, continually using the sacred names of Jesus and Mary, frequently visiting the church and praying, scorning the wickedness of the world, and demanding the justice of God, because man's depravity cries to Heaven for vengeance. Who would seek the usurer under such a garb! And, yet, how often do you not find him there? One would imagine he saw the personification of virtue before him, but if, in some way, the mask is torn from their faces, behold, he sees naught but the greatest hypocrites and scoundrels.

Allow me to show you a third hypocrite, the most despicable of all. It is Judas, the traitor. To him we can truthfully apply the words of St. Gregory: The devil has possession of the hypocrite's heart and will give it rest no longer. Behold him in the house of Simon where Mary Magdalen anointed the feet of our Lord. See how his avarice pretends compassion for the poor. Watch the sacrilegious thief at that last supper, how he feigns terror at the words of our Lord: "Amen, I say to you, that one of you is about to betray Me." Matt.

26, 21. Behold him at last at the head of the soldiers, embracing his Lord and Master, betraying Him with a kiss and delivering Him into the hands of His enemies. Oh, the hypocrite, you feel inclined to exclaim: that man could be capable of such atrocity! Beloved Christians, let us never make ourselves like unto Judas by a sacrilegious confession or Communion. How many approach the tribunal of penance with the hypocritical mien of a sincere penitent! Yet their confessions are a falsehood, their contrition an imposition. How many hypocrites kneel at the altar-railing, apparently absorbed in prayer; they strike their breast, they receive their God and with Him also the judgment of eternal damnation. Thus, my dear Christians, we have seen a few examples of hypocrites from Holy Scripture, by which we may learn how detestable these characters have formerly been, and how detestable they are at the present day. Which of us would like to be counted among their number? What heart would not be stricken with terror and moved to its depth with contrition if his conscience told him: You,

too, are a dissembler, you also are a Cain, a Herod, a Judas. You, too, have hitherto only pretended piety; you also made a mockery of religion by using it to deceive others. If we have been guilty of any species of hypocrisy let us deplore the great fault with deep contrition, let us cast away this mask of deception, and, by true conversion, become in reality what in the eyes of the world we wish to be considered. What can it profit us to deceive the world! After death, we must appear before God who searches the hearts and reins of men, who cannot be deceived and before whom the most hidden and secret things will come to light. Cast off the clothing of sheep. Let us appear before the world as we are before God, but let us appear before God as just in our works, unimpeachable in our character, and faithful to Him in small, as well as in great things. For God is the truth, and lying and hypocrisy are an abomination to Him. Amen.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON SCOFFERS AT RELIGION.

"And they laughed Him to scorn."
Matt. 9, 24.

WHEN Jesus came into the house of Jairus and, told the minstrels and the multitude making a tumult: "The girl is not dead, but sleepeth, they laughed Him to scorn." Even, at the present day, our Lord suffers the same treatment from baptized as well as unbaptized. Now, it is His divinity, or His sacred personality, again, His vicegerent on earth, His Holy Church, anon His divine doctrine or His priesthood at which the shafts of scorn and ridicule are aimed. You need but join an assemblage of men to be surrounded by a herd of scoffers as by foul air. You will find these jeerers not only among grey-haired reprobates, but also among beardless youths who consider it a mark of superior education and knowledge, to turn religion into mockery and ridicule.

What kind of persons are those who take

so shameful a liberty with God and holy things? They are — my dear Christians, — people of whom it would be difficult to judge which is the greater, their ignorance or their arrogance. He who wishes to pass judgment on any matter should at least, know something pertaining to it. If I attempted to give you direction in agriculture or in mechanical art, you might justly laugh and say: Do not attempt to give instruction about matters of which you know not. Does not the same principle hold good in matters of religion? Hence, we find some of our separated brethren, or pedagogues of "higher criticism", or the so-called liberal Catholics, who are unacquainted with the first principles of our holy religion, pass judgment on its doctrines and institutions, we, too, can justly exclaim: What right have you to criticise? They may be learned in their different professions, they may be authorities in law, medicine, or the natural sciences, but if they know less about religion than children in the first catechism class, it follows that their judgment about it is as valuable as a blind man's criticism of paint-

ing, or a deaf man's, of harmony. To these presumptuous critics, you can justly apply the old adage (ne sutor ultra crepidam), Let not the cobbler go beyond his last, in other words, Judge not about that of which you are ignorant.

But, alas, these scoffers and mockers are not actuated by ignorance and presumption alone, but by a deep-seated, diabolical hatred of Christ and His holy religion. He who does not practice his religion, will find it a mirror wherein he daily sees his wickedness; a book wherein he reads his own condemnation. Hence it is not surprising if these sinners, steeped in wickedness, hate religion and earnestly wish it could be annihilated. Hence, it is no wonder if wrong-doers and libertines use every means to raise doubts and objections about matters of faith. The devil assists them diligently in this undertaking. The reading of irreligious papers and books, the association with unprincipled men, the negligence of all religious duties accomplish what is still wanting in obscuring the light of faith, and, at last, in utterly extinguishing it. Thus these wilful sinners go

so far in their downward course to destruction, that they not only become infidels, but also scoffers and haters of religion. To them it must seem some consolation to have many associates of wickedness in this world, and many companions in hell, since they are so assiduous in estranging others from God and defrauding them of their holy religion.

Such, my dear Christians, are the persons who deride your religion. They are ignorant of the teachings of faith, or they are wicked; and its doctrines reminding them of the punishment which awaits them, strike terror into their souls. Should such ridiculers be the means of inducing you to be ashamed of your holy religion and to cause your abandoning practices of piety, and of leading you astray from God? Oh, no, treat them with the contempt they deserve, and do not consider them worthy of your friendship. He who dwells long in miasmatic regions, will, in course of time, imbibe the malaria, and he, who associates daily with scoffers, will gradually absorb some of the venom which continually comes from their evil mouth, will be infected and end in

becoming an infidel and scoffer at religion. If, unhappily, you are compelled, either on account of your work or position, to associate with such enemies of Christ and His holy religion, be circumspect and prudent, but do not be cowardly. When the occasion demands, defend your holy religion manfully without fear of human respect. Refute the slanderer and glory in being a Catholic. You need not fear, you will soon discover how obtuse the shafts of ridicule, and how cowardly your opponents are, if they meet with manly courage. You will gain respect from all fair-minded men for bravely adhering to your convictions, and obtain reward from God, your Lord and Master. If you suffer scorn and contempt for His sake, remember He was scoffed and blasphemed for yours. You will be rewarded by His acknowledging you before His heavenly Father. Amen.

TWENTY-FOURTH AND LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON DELAY OF REPENTANCE.

"Pray that your flight be not in the winter or on the Sabbath." Matt. 24, 10.

THE abomination of desolation spoken of by our Divine Saviour in to-day's gospel, is, in its literal sense, the desecration of the temple and the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, but according to the fathers of the Church, it is also a figure of mortal sin which desecrates the soul and delivers it to eternal destruction. In this sense, the winter of which our Lord speaks is the close of life, the last sickness, and we are expressly warned not to postpone the flight from sin, namely repentance, to the winter, that is to advanced age and, the uncertain time of our last illness.

Verily, any procrastination might prove fatal. We know not whether we shall have a winter of life, if we shall arrive at old age or die after a lingering disease. Death can come to us at any moment and as suddenly

as the lightning from Heaven. But this we know, if we appear before God in the state of mortal sin, we are lost forever.

The careless sinner consoles himself with the thought that sudden deaths are exceptional occurrences and that he will not meet with such a fate. If the frequency with which they occur and which, according to statistics, are on the increase, can still lead you to think they are rare, I leave to your own judgment. Supposing, however, for argument's sake, that they are exceptional, if you meet with such a death, what then? The possibility is there. Oh, if such a death should surprise you in the state of mortal sin, in the state of enmity with God! Can you imagine this fate without being filled with terror? You would burn eternally in the fearful flames of hell, eternally weep and lament, eternally despair without hope of relief. You would be damned as long as God exists and that is forever. Do you desire so terrible a fate? Unfortunate sinner, you are not so indifferent about matters of little importance, of which the gain or loss is perhaps a few dollars.

Let us, however, waive the possibility of a sudden death, and presume that, by divine inspiration, you have been assured of dying after a long illness. Are you therefore certain that you will be reconciled to God by a good confession? You desire this, but may not your hope be delusive? May it not be that in you will be verified this warning (qualis vita, mors ita) As one has lived, so he will die.

What is the ordinary course of a person's death? At some time scarcely to be remembered, there is a slight indisposition. As it continues the physician is called, but he, as well as friends and relatives, makes little of it, and all hope it will soon pass away. Suddenly, without any premonition, the illness assumes a dangerous phase. The physician now looks serious, and the first signs of the mind's wandering are perceived. It is only now that the patient is asked if he wishes a priest. Ah, picture to yourself the consternation of the poor sinner, who did not expect anything of the kind. Perhaps twenty or thirty years have elapsed since he went to confession. Reluctantly, he gives his con-

sent. The priest arrives but finds the patient unprepared for confession, unable to remember his sins. Perhaps he has even lost his speech or consciousness, and is now called upon to perform a duty which every pious Christian, even in the best of health, considers a most difficult task. This poor man must now correct the errors of a life-time, his sins and negligences towards God. What think you, my dear Christians, will he accomplish the task satisfactorily? Will he, weak in mind and memory, consumed by fever, tortured by pains, struggling for breath, confused with the fear of death, the grave and eternity, will he be able to make a good confession?

This however is not the greatest difficulty, for God asks no impossibilities in the hour of death. He is satisfied if the dying person tries his best, and does as well as his strength permits. There is one act, however, which he must perform and from which he can never be released and that is an act of sincere, supernatural contrition. Will he, with one effort, be able to cast off the garment of sin which he has worn for

twenty or thirty years? Will he be able to love immediately that which he has hated during his whole life-time, and hate that which he has loved so long? Ah, my dear brethren, these are most serious questions. The Church teaches that without a sincere contrition proceeding from motives of faith, viz.: because we have offended God, lost His grace, deserved hell or from other supernatural motives, every confession is sacrilegious. Now, it is the opinion of experienced and pious confessors, and of its truth I am also convinced, that the contrition of a number of those converted on their death-beds, does not proceed from motives of having offended God, but from a natural fear of death. Experience proves the truth of this conclusion, by the fact that of those who recover, so many usually fall back into their old habits. Whether these tardy death-bed confessions bring about reconciliation with God, I cannot say. I, however, should not like to die, and appear before God with no other hope of forgiveness than this last confession affords, nor take consolation in obtaining burial in consecrated

grounds, but have my soul buried in hell. There are, of course, exceptions, for example, the penitent thief, who on account of the sincerity of his contrition was, even the same day, with his Lord and Master in Paradise, but these may be called miracles of grace, and should we risk our salvation on such exceptions?

This, my dear Christians, is the end of those who postpone their flight from sin, that is, their conversion to their death-bed—to their evening of life. Let us heed the warning of our Lord, and work out our salvation while there is time. Cleanse your heart from all sin, do now that penance which you would so gladly perform if time were given you. Prepare now for death, by a life of virtue and good works, that when the Eternal Judge approaches, you may meet Him with a glorious Hosanna and be worthy of partaking of His eternal glory. Amen.

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AUTHOR Wolfgarten

TITLE Short Sermons II

DATE LOANED	BORROWER'S NAME	ROOM NUMBER
	Schaffner	NOV
	McCarrick	OCT 6
	Wood	MAR 9

1689